

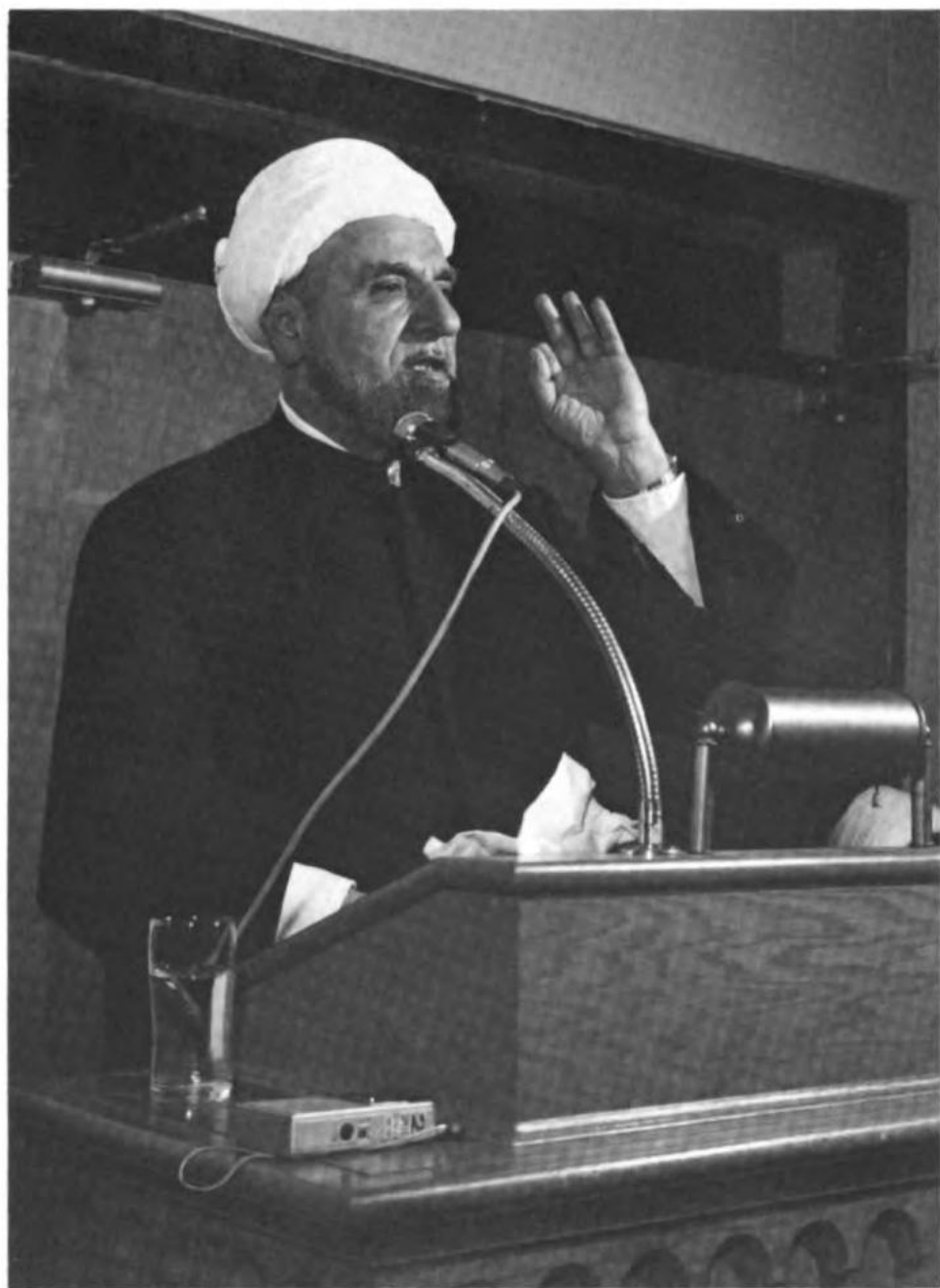
THE BROTHER OF THE PROPHET MOHAMMAD

(The Imam Ali)

*A reconstruction of Islamic history and
an extensive research of the Shi-ite and
Sunnite Islamic schools of thought*

VOL. II

Mohamad Jawad Chirri



The Author

**THE BROTHER
OF THE PROPHET
MOHAMMAD
(The Imam Ali)**

**A reconstruction of Islamic history and an extensive
research of the Shi-ite and Sunnite
Islamic schools of thought**

VOLUME II

by

Mohamad Jawad Chirri
Director of the Islamic Center of America

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of Michigan City, Indiana**

I do not find adequate words to express my deep appreciation to his selfless and tremendous contributions in polishing sentences and correcting words in this book.

About the Author

Imam Mohamad Jawad Chirri is a native of Lebanon and a graduate of the distinguished religious institute of Najaf in Iraq. He is an Islamic theologian, lecturer, historian and author. He is the host of a weekly radio program called "Islam in Focus," broadcast by WNIC. From his published books are:

The Faith of Islam

Moslem Practice

Islamic Teaching

Imam Hussein, Leader of the Martyrs

Inquiries About Islam (Thousands of American libraries acquired this book)

Al-Khilafatu Fi Al-Dustour Al-Islami (The Caliphate in the Islamic Constitution—Arabic)

AMEER Al-Mumineen (The Leader of the Believers—Arabic)

Imam Chirri was invited by the Detroit Muslim Community to be their spiritual leader. He was instrumental in constructing the Islamic Center of America, one of the largest Islamic institutes in North America. He is currently the Director of this Center.

Imam Chirri's work was extended to West Africa and the Middle East. While on a lecture tour in 1958, he was able to induce the Lebanese community in Sierra Leone to build a children's hospital as a present to the natives of that country.

During a visit to the Middle East in 1959, the author dealt with an old Islamic problem and succeeded in find-

ing its solution. For over thirteen hundred years, the Muslims were divided into Sunnites and Shi-ites (neither of the two sides was recognizing the soundness of the teachings of the other), in spite of the agreement of both Schools on all the teaching of the Holy Quran and the authentically reported hadiths of the Holy Prophet Mohammad.

The author met the late Sheikh Al-Azhar, Sheikh Mahmood Shaltut, on July 1, 1959. He discussed with him the important issue. At the conclusion of the discussion, Sheikh Shaltut acknowledged the soundness of the Islamic Shi-ite Jaafari School. The author requested him to declare equality between the Shi-ite Jaafari and Sunnite Schools. The Declaration was broadcast and published on July 7, 1959. This Declaration was historical and the first of its kind since the separation of the two Schools.

The spirit of true Islamic brotherhood can prevail only by mutual understanding among the various Islamic Schools. It is with this in mind that the author presents this book, *The Brother of the Prophet Mohammad*. Needless to say, the arguments among various Islamic Schools revolve mainly around the history of this great Imam (Ali Ibn Talib). A true understanding of his position in Islam is bound to lead the Muslims to a more genuine brotherhood.

Introduction

Americans who know Islam and Muslims are relatively few, and those who know the plurality of the Islamic Schools of Thought and that there are among the Muslims Sunnites and Shi-ites are fewer.

However, the events of the Iranian Revolution which took place in 1978-82, put the news of the Muslims in general and the Shi-ite Muslims in particular on the front pages of the Western and Eastern press. This is because the Shi-ite Muslims are the absolute majority among the Muslims in Iran. The American press spoke of the Shi-ites briefly, and many times inaccurately. This reconfirmed my conviction for the need of an English book dealing with the two Islamic Schools with some details based on serious research.

Since the difference between the two schools centers around the political position of the Imam Ali, Son of Abu Talib, it would be appropriate to study this unique Imam and his political-religious history. For this is the only means through which we can understand the two schools.

To satisfy this need, I wrote this book and called it *The Brother of the Prophet Mohammad*. This is a title which was given to the Imam Ali uniquely by the Holy Prophet Mohammad, who "brothered" him from among all the Muslims. He never chose for himself any other man as a brother.

The title was the dearest to the heart of the Imam. When he introduced himself publicly, he used to mention his brotherhood to the Prophet after mentioning his servitude to the Almighty. And it was pleasing to the Holy Prophet to call Ali "My Brother."

The Muslims agree that Imam Ali had what no other person from among the Muslims had of distinctions. He was the only person among them who was raised by the Messenger of God since the days of his childhood. He was brought up by him according to his ethical standards, then he chose him from among all men to be his brother.

The Muslim scholars, Sunnites and Shi-ites, agree that Ali was the most knowledgeable in the Book of God (the Qur'an) and the teachings of His Prophet among all the companions. He was the richest source of wisdom and the most eloquent speaker, the greatest defender of the faith, the firmest in maintaining justice and the most selfless endeavorer in the way of God. These qualities are the Islamic criteria of distinctions, for the Holy Qur'an announces that God prefers the endeavors in His way to the inactive; that those who know and those who do not know are not equal, and it announces that the noblest among people in the sight of God are their most righteous.

This makes it very clear that the Sunnites and the Shi-ites do not only agree on all Islamic principles stated in the Holy Qur'an or in the authentic hadiths of the Holy Prophet Mohammad but also agree on the religious and the scholarly place of the Imam Ali in Islam. Therefore, when the Sunnites and Shi-ites differ, they do so only politically; for they differ on the political-religious aspects rather than the Imam Ali's religious and scholarly place in Islam.

While they agree that Ali was a Righteous Caliph who came to power through a popular election, they disagree on whether he was, in addition to this, a Caliph by the Prophet's selection. Those who do not believe that the Prophet appointed Ali his successor think that the theory of the Prophet's selection of the Imam Ali is a theory of inheritance of rule through blood relationship. Those who believe that the Prophet selected the Imam his successor say that the belief in the selection of the Imam Ali by the Prophet is the opposite of the belief in the inheritance of rule.

The Muslims also disagree on his political-religious

role in the history of Islam as a statesman. While they agree on his adherence to the principle of absolute justice and his firmness in enforcement of the Islamic law in spirit and letter, they disagree on the wisdom of such an inflexible attitude.

There is another important matter pertaining to his political-religious place in the Islamic history, namely: his role in founding the Islamic state. This aspect was not mentioned clearly nor was it a subject of a serious discussion among the historians and scholars of history.

Since the Muslims agree on the religious-scholarly place of the Imam, it would be superfluous to discuss those aspects of the Imam's life.

This book does not review the history of the Imam in details, nor does it speak of his knowledge, his eloquence or his wisdom. Nor does it discuss his piety and immaterialistic attitude, nor does it speak of his unusual performance. Its discussion centers on the political-religious place of the Imam in Islam, his spiritual relationship to the Prophet Mohammad and his contribution in establishing the Islamic state and the spread of the Faith of Islam.

It discusses him as a Caliph and as a statesman. It discusses also what was said about his policy and statesmanship and the causes which led to the accumulations of the difficulties which prevented him from reaching a peaceful and more lasting rule during the days of his caliphate.

Finally, this book discusses the caliphate as a religious-political system and the kind of caliphate which is consonant with the nature of the Islamic message. Therefore, this book contains the following parts:

1. The Imam during the era of the Prophethood.
2. The Imam in the era of the Three Caliphs.
3. The Imam in his own era.
4. The Caliphate in the Islamic Law and the conclusion of the discussion.

The first volume of the book dealt with the first

two parts. This second volume deals with part three, part four and the conclusion.

I have endeavored to discover the relationship between the historical events which involved the life of the Imam and which took place during the fifty-three years since the commencement of the prophethood to the end of the Righteous Caliphate.

The reader may find those events were connected with each other through strong ties. Thus, they formed a chain of causes and effects, the subsequent among them was the outcome of its precedent.

In narrating the events of that period, I did not rely on only the sources from the respected books of history, but I tried to add to that, whenever it was possible, what I found in the Authentics and other reliable books of hadith which recorded those events. This is because many Muslim scholars rely upon hadiths more than they rely upon books of history, especially when the hadiths are recorded in the known Authentics and the rest of the reliable books.

I did not try to discuss the Imam as a man whose special relationship with his Lord distinguished him and enabled him to perform miracles and bring unusual events. I rather tried to discuss him as a man who is subject to rules of nature, time and place who tried his utmost to serve sacred principles and tried to live by those principles and for those principles.

I hope that this book will contribute to better understanding and stronger brotherhood among the Muslims. Certainly the personality of the Imam and his history are inspiring, and if the Muslims are ready to receive that inspiration, it will lead them to unity.

What would be written of truth about the personality of a man who was chosen by the Prophet to be his brother would certainly be a potential for strengthening the spirit of brotherhood and love among all Muslims.

—*Mohamad Jawad Chirri*

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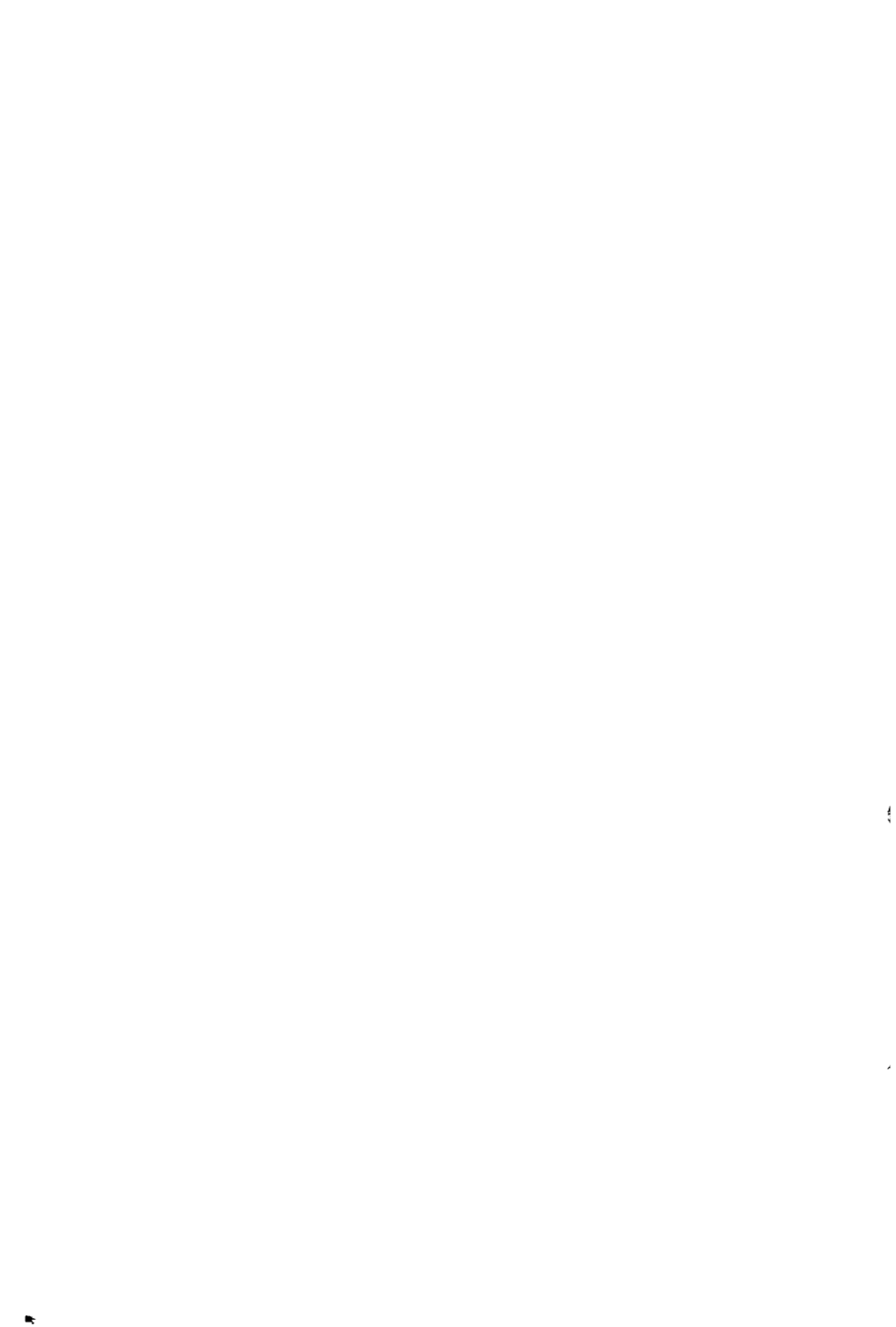
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PART III

THE IMAM ALI

IN HIS

OWN ERA



The Election of the Imam Ali

Had Quraish (Meccan Community) remained in control of the political affairs during the first few days after the death of Othman, it would have prevented the Imam Ali Ibn Abu Talib from coming to power. Had Tallah, Al-Zubeir, and their supporters expected Ali to come to power, they would not have opposed Othman or called for his assassination. Each of the two companions was hopeful that he, rather than Ali, would be the fourth caliph, and Quraish was determined to use all its power to keep Ali away from the caliphate. You may remember that the Imam said to the Hashimites when the Second Caliph issued his instructions concerning the Electoral Convention: "Should your people (the Qureshites) be obeyed in matters pertaining to you, you will never be given the leadership."¹

Fortunately, Quraish lost the political initiative for a few days after Othman's assassination. The Qureshites were astonished and numbed, and they did not know what to do. It is true that the non-Omayyad Qureshite leaders instigated the uprising against Othman and called for his assassination. Yet, the people who made the revolution were from outside Mecca and Medina. They were Egyptians, Bassrites, and Kufites. These revolutionary elements were in control of the political affairs, having what the

1. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 33.
Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 239.

Qureshites did not have of influence during that short period.

The reign of the Third Caliph exhibited to the Muslims that Quraish had committed a classical error when it diverted the caliphate from Ali to Othman. The natives of Medina found in the few days following his death a breathing time and an opportunity to liberate themselves from the Qureshite influence and its despotic role in directing the caliphate and giving it to whomever it chose.

Thus, Quraish for the first time was not obeyed in a matter pertaining to the House of the Prophet. Therefore, the House of the Prophet was given the leadership, and Ali, who was the head of the House, was elected.

It was ironic concerning the caliphate that Ali desired to be the elected caliph when Abu Bakr was elected, when Omar was appointed, and when Othman was selected. And at each time Quraish used to stand in his way and divert the caliphate from him to others. Yet, his desire and the Qureshite desire did not clash when he was offered the caliphate after the death of Othman. The Qureshite leaders were wishing, out of jealousy, that Ali would not be given the leadership. Ali, on the other hand, wished that the caliphate would be diverted from him because he expected to face tremendous difficulties which could not be surmounted by a man of principle such as Ali.

A Drafted Caliph

Al-Tabari reported that the Meccan and the Medinite companions including Talhah and Al-Zubeir met with the Imam Ali and told him: "We have to have an Imam." He said: "I have no desire for your leadership. I would be satisfied with whomever you choose." They said: "We shall choose none but you." They came to him time after time, saying: "We know of no one who has more right or precedence in Islam, or closer relation to the Prophet than you." He said: "Do not do it. I would like to be an as-

sistant rather than a leader.” They said: “By God, we shall not desist until we elect you.”²

Al-Tabari reported also that the people remained five days after the death of Othman without an Imam. The revolutionary people gathered the people of Medina and told them: You are the people of the counsel. You are the makers of the caliphate, and your decision would be honored by the nation. Look for anyone whom you choose, and we will follow you. The majority said: We choose Ali Ibn Abu Talib. We will be satisfied with him. The revolutionaries gave the people of Medina two days to choose a leader. People came to Ali saying to him: “We want to elect you; you are witnessing what happened to Islam and what we are exclusively (from among the rest of the people) facing of difficulties.”

A Gloomy Expectation

Ali said: “Leave me out and seek other than I. Certainly we are facing a crisis with many faces and colors. The hearts will not stand for it, and the minds will not rest on it.” They said: We ask you in the name of God. Can’t you see what we are facing? Can’t you see what happened to Islam? Can’t you see the crisis? Do you not fear God? He said: “I accept, and you should know that if I accept, I will follow only my knowledge in administering your affairs. If you leave me out, I would be only one of you, yet I would be of the most obedient to whomever you elect.”³

They left him after they made an appointment with him for the following day . . .

The following day (Friday), people came to the Mosque and Ali mounted the pulpit and said: “O people, upon mutual counsel and permission, this affair is yours. No one has the right to lead you except the one you

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2. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 427.
Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 98.
 3. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 434.
Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 99.

choose. We parted yesterday on an agreement. If you choose, I will sit for you; otherwise, I will not have any ill feelings against anyone (if you change your opinion).” They said: “We are still on the same principle as yesterday.”⁴

People elected him. It is said that Talhah was the first one who gave him his allegiance.⁵ The people of Kufa said that Malik Al-Ashtar was the first one who gave Ali his allegiance.

Unachievable Goals

The Imam reluctantly accepted the election, although he wished that the caliphate had been diverted from him to another person. The caliphate in his view was not an end. He viewed it only as a means of spreading justice among people, realizing brotherhood among the followers of the Islamic message, and leading the nation to a life ruled by principles of the Holy Qur’an and the instructions of the Holy Prophet. All evidence was pointing to the fact that the achievements of these goals had become impossible. The unity of the nation had come to an end during the reign of the Third Caliph. His saddening death was expected only to increase the division of the nation and magnify the flame of dissention. Ali’s program called for implementation of equality in distribution of public funds, executing justice, removal of corruption, and elimination of discrimination. This was expected only to meet the strongest opposition from elements of strong influence who were not willing to relinquish their acquired privileges.

Quraish’s Hostility

Quraish, the community that blocked Ali’s way to the

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4. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 435.
Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 99.
 5. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 435.
Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 99.

caliphate for twenty-five years (thinking that if he comes to power the caliphate will remain in his house), will do all it can to destroy his caliphate.

The Privileged Companions

The class of companions who were preferred in salary by the Second and Third Caliphs and acquired wealth through investment of the surplus fund which they received will oppose Ali because he believes in distributing the public funds equally among the Muslims.

Those who enriched themselves by accepting huge sums of money and vast pieces of land from the Third Caliph and his appointed governors will also oppose the Imam because he intends to recover what they received illegally and put it back in the Islamic treasury.

The Promoted Companions

Talhah and Al-Zubeir, members of the Electoral Convention, were representing a new class of companions and endeavored to bring the reign of Othman to an end (hoping that one of them will replace him). They were expected to try to fight Ali with all their power. The two companions were extremely powerful. The fortune of each had amounted to tens of millions of dirhams.^{5a} They had the support of the Qureshite clans and a great number of the people of Bassrah and Kufa. And above all, they were supported by Ayeshah, Mother of the Believers, who enjoyed a great influence and a high prestige.

In fact, this important lady was one of the tremendous obstacles which the Imam had to face, because she was extremely hostile to the Imam. She was effective and influential because of her high position. She was the one who fermented a revolution against Othman in order to

5a. Ibn Saad mentioned in his *Al-Tabadat*, part 3, p. 110 that Al-Zubeir's wealth amounted to forty million dirhams and in p. 222 that Talhah's wealth amounted to thirty million dirhams.

replace him by her cousin Talhah or her brother-in-law Al-Zubeir.

The Omayyads

More dangerous than all these elements were the Omayyads, members of the clan of the assassinated Caliph, whose influence was escalated during his reign and one of them, Muaweyah, became the strongest man in the Muslim World.

Tribalism

What made the Omayyads extremely dangerous was their exploitation of the tribal spirit in the Arab society which compelled the members of any tribe, regardless of their number, to obey their chief under any condition. Such a spirit produces evil when the chief of the tribe is greedy, putting his worldly interest ahead of his religion. It is very easy for a ruler who controls a national or state treasury to purchase the loyalty of a tribe by purchasing the loyalty of its chief. There is nothing that corrupts man's conscience like money. The Omayyads were masters in the art of purchasing people's loyalty and corrupting their conscience. They were the rulers of the important Islamic provinces, and this enabled them to have a great number of proteges and purchase the loyalty of many tribes by pleasing their chiefs.

The Absence of the Military Draft System

The aforementioned difficulties would be accentuated when compulsory military service is absent. The Faith of Islam makes it mandatory to the Muslims to defend the nation and the sacred principles of Islam. Yet, the performance of this duty was left, during the time of the Prophet and the first three Caliphs, to the conscience of the Muslims. The Islamic Army was composed of volunteers.

When the nation is united and people are conscious of their religious duties, it would be easy for the government to gather task forces in order to meet any threatening danger. But when the nation is divided and people are confused by the slogans of various parties, it would be most difficult to meet arising dangers and subduing subversive elements.

This is much harder when subversive elements already exist and military forces acquired through purchasing the loyalty of chiefs of tribes through public funds. This was the situation when the Imam was elected. There was no national military establishment. People were divided and confused, and Muaweyah, the governor of Syria, had established in that province during the eighteen years of his governorship a viable military power by gathering the tribes of Syria around him and putting all their forces under his command.

The caliphate was diverted from the "Brother of the Messenger" when the nation was healthy and united, and religion was its main concern. Then the caliphate was forced upon him when the nation was divided and the caliphate became bloody.

Ali was not the man who runs away from his responsibilities even in a desperate situation where the elements of evil and anarchy which shall stand in his way are much stronger than the good elements which support him.

The Imam was fully aware that the Omayyads were to acquire the authority of the Muslim World and transform the caliphate into a despotic Kingdom. The Imam was aware of this because he was aware of the prevalent corruption in the nation and because of the information which he received from the Prophet about the future of the nation.

His awareness of this future would not justify in his eyes a passive attitude. As a matter of fact, his expectation of the future success of the Omayyads made him more determined to fulfill his duty after he found some good elements determined to assist him and desirous to combat injustice in the Islamic society and purify it of corruption.

The Imam expected the Omayyads to control the Muslim World, but this expected control was not inevitable or predestined from Heaven where man has no choice. On the contrary, what was expected to happen was to be a result of failure of the Muslims to combat injustice and stand for the truth.

Had the Imam refused to lead the nation after the righteous companions and their good followers offered him assistance, he would have assisted the Omayyads in reaching their evil goals.

It was his duty to stand up and to do all he could to prevent them from coming to power. If the nation supports him, justice will prevail and he would avoid the Muslims a great danger that threatened their religion and future as a nation of a great mission. If the nation let him down, he would have fulfilled his duty and pleased his Lord and his conscience. He would be following the examples of the prophets who entered into struggles which they did not hope to win.

Blood and Tears

As the Muslims put the Imam face to face with his responsibility and forced the caliphate upon him, he tried also to make them face their responsibility. He warned his electors that they will face very insane crises which will demand heavy sacrifices, and that they should not expect but blood and tears. He told them that they are about to face a crisis of manifold faces and colors with which neither hearts stand nor minds rest with certainty.

He told the people of the acquired privileges who enjoyed self enrichment at the expense of others that he will re-direct the nation and will not listen to criticism by people who are opposed to justice. "If I respond to your call, I will follow only my own knowledge."

The good companions of the Prophet and their followers gave the Imam their allegiance (while they had a clear idea about what they will face) with an unequaled

zeal. His election was truly an election by the people whose hearts were filled with faith, without being corrupted by politics and quest of prestige. These people believed that they were electing the Brother of the Prophet, the most knowledgeable of his message and the Prophet's choice from his nation.

As to the people of political ambition and material greed from the members of the preferred classes, they were unable to resist the tide of enthusiasm of the masses of the people. They had lost political control during that short period. The death of Othman stunned them, and they could not gather themselves to resist the Imam. They gave him their allegiance as other people did. Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam, one of the most hostile persons to the Imam, was among those who elected him. Talhah and Al-Zubeir elected the Imam though each of them was hopeful to become the caliph after Othman.

AN EARLY OPPOSITION

A Qureshite woman of great influence and high voice was not stunned by the sequel of the events. Ayeshah, wife of the Prophet and a Mother of the Believers, was completely present-minded, capable of thinking, planning and working for her political goal. She declared her opposition to the Imam the moment she received the news of his election.

Ayeshah was the most outspoken person against Othman. Her propaganda against him was one of the main factors in bringing the rebels to Medina and besieging the Caliph. When he was besieged, she was calling for his assassination.

Al-Balatheri in his history recorded that when the situation became serious for Othman, he ordered Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam and Abdul Rahman Ibn Attab Ibn Oseid to meet with Ayeshah. They came to her and she was preparing herself for pilgrimage. They requested her to stay in Medina, that God may protect the man (Othman) through

her. She said: "I shall not do what you are requesting." The two men stood up and Marwan recited a verse of poetry, indicating that Ayeshah started the fire and when the fire grew she was leaving! At this point she told him: "Marwan, I wish that Othman were in one of my sacks and I could carry him, so I may throw him in the sea."⁶

Abdullah Ibn Abbas, while on his way to Mecca (after Othman appointed him "Ameer" (leader) of the pilgrimage), met Ayeshah on the road and she said to him: "Ibn Abass, God has given you wisdom, intelligence, and eloquence. Beware, do not try to dissuade the rebels to save that tyrant."⁷

Sudden Reversal

Her hostile attitude towards Othman was immediately changed when she received the news of Ali's election after Othman's death. While at "Saraf" coming back from her pilgrimage, Ayeshah met Obeid Ibn Abu Selema (who was related to her through her mother). The following dialogue took place:

Ayeshah: What do you know?

Obeid: Othman was killed and the people remained eight days without a caliph.

Ayeshah: Then what did they do?

Obeid: They elected Ali.

Ayeshah: May Heaven fall on earth if your man succeeds. Return me to Mecca.

She turned her face towards Mecca, saying "By God, Othman was killed unjustly. By God, I shall avenge for his blood."

Obeid: By God, you are the first one who discredited him. You used to say about him: Kill Naathal (likening Othman to a

6. Al-Balatheri, *Ansabul-Ashraf*, part 4, p. 45.

7. Ibn Abu-Al-Hadeed, his *Commentary on Nahjul-Balagh*, part 2, p. 506.

heavily bearded Arab Jew named Naathal) because he deserted the faith.

Ayeshah: They made him repent, then they killed him. They said and I said, and my last saying is better than my first saying.⁸

Thus, the Mother of the Believers turned in one hour, from an enemy of Othman urging people to kill him, to an avenger of his blood, and she did not lack the argument for her opinion in both situations for both attitudes.

Campaigning for War at the Sacred Mosque

She went to Mecca and when she arrived at the Sacred Mosque of Mecca she delivered a fiery speech, urging people to avenge the blood of Othman.⁹ She forgot, and through her influence as a wife of the Prophet and daughter of the First Caliph, she made her audience forget that she was the holder of the biggest share of the responsibility of his death.

She forgot and made people forget that Islam had forbidden and abolished the pre-Islamic traditions which allowed people to wage bloody wars for revenge, and that the punishment of a killer is not in jurisdiction of any one but a true Islamic government.

She forgot and made people forget that God had commanded her and all the wives of the Messenger to stay at their houses, and that she should not display herself as women used to do during the pre-Islamic days.¹⁰

Her audience in Mecca were the Qureshites who shared with her the hatred of Ali since the days of the Prophethood. These people made continuous efforts to keep Ali away from leadership for twenty-five years. He was elected caliph only when the Qureshites lost the political

8. Abn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 106.

9. Abd Al-Fattah Abdul-Maqsoud, *Al-Imam Ali Ibn Abu Talib*, part 2, p. 297.

10. The Holy Qur'an, chapter 33, verse 33.

control after the death of Othman. Now Mother of Believers was trying to gather the Qureshite anew in order to destroy his leadership after the believers elected him. Mecca is the Sacred City whose sanctity Ali would not violate. Therefore, it was a safe place for the conspirators. They gathered there from various places after Ayeshah preceded them, raising the banner of rebellion towards "Ameer Al-Mumineen" (the Leader of the Believers).

A Preparation for War Under Way

The first one to respond to her call was Abdullah Ibn Amir Al-Hadrami who was Othman's appointed governor of Mecca.¹¹ He said: "I am the first one to seek revenge for the blood of Othman." When the Omayyads knew about the attitude of Ayeshah, they left Medina secretly to Mecca.¹² Talhah and Al-Zubeir stayed in Medina for a while, then decided to go to Mecca to join the Mother of Believers.¹³ They left Medina pretending that they were going for Omrah (a brief visit to the ancient House of God in Mecca).

The Two Companions Joined

Talhah and Al-Zubeir were most expected to join the camp of Ayeshah because her goal was to cancel the caliphate of Ali in order to replace him with one of the two companions.

She instigated people against Othman and ordered them to kill him for the same purpose.¹⁴ She wanted to replace him with her cousin Talhah, as her prime choice, or with her brother-in-law Al-Zubeir as a second choice.¹⁵

11. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, pp. 449-450.

12. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, pp. 448-450.

13. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 452.

14. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 459.

15. Ibn Abu Al-Hadeed, his *Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 2, p. 506.

The Omayyads Were Still to Be Reckoned with

The meeting of the conspirators and their dialogue in Mecca indicate that the Omayyads after Othman were still something to take into account. People of Mecca were with them; the former governor Abdullah Al-Hadrami was in the front line, and they did not encounter any opposition from the Meccans. Yaala Ibn Omayah (he is Ibn Munyah), Othman's former appointed governor of Yemen, pillaged what was under his control of the Islamic treasury in Yemen before the arrival of Obeidullah Ibn Al-Abbas, the Imam's appointed governor of Yemen. Ibn Omayah brought for the conspirators six hundred thousand dirhams and six hundred camels.¹⁶ This enabled them to implement a portion of their unholy project.

Abdullah Ibn Amir, who was Othman's appointed governor in Bassrah, brought a great amount of funds.¹⁷ He informed them that they had many proteges in Bassrah. In fact everyone of Othman's appointed governors had many proteges. The purchase of the Arab tribes' loyalty was the Omayyad art. They excelled in that art and bought many chiefs and tribes in order to erect the pillars of the Omayyad Kingdom.

Bassrah the Chosen Target

When the conspirators tried to decide to which city they should go in order to begin the revenge for the blood of Othman, they realized that all of Syria was under the control of an Omayyad governor, Muaweyah, who was more hostile to the new Caliph than they were. Finally, they decided to go to Bassrah in spite of the presence of the Imam's appointed governor. They chose Bassrah because it had many Omayyad proteges.¹⁸ They hoped that the words of Mother of the Believers will influence the ma-

16. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 106.

17. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 106.

18. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 106.

majority of the people of its population to repudiate the Imam.

United Only Against the Imam

The Omayyads and their previous enemies: Ayesha, Talhah, and Al-Zubeir had agreed to stand against the Imam, who was their common enemy. The destruction of his leadership was their first goal. They were divided on their ultimate goal, namely: Who is to rule after the destruction of the Imam's caliphate? The Omayyads were working for returning the caliphate to them, while Ayesha and Talhah and Al-Zubeir were opposed to that. The Omayyads were wiser than Talhah, Al-Zubeir, and Ayesha. The Omayyads were hopeful to eliminate them after using them. To them, the three leaders were partners in shedding the blood of Othman and dangerous to the Omayyads. The following story shows the extent of their difference in goals.

Sa-eed Ibn A-Auss, Othman's former appointed governor of Kufa, came to Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam and his group while the caravan was at the beginning of its journey to Bassrah. He asked them: "Where are you going and leaving alive the people from whom you should seek revenge? (He meant Ayesha, Talhah, and Al-Zubeir). Kill them and go back to your homes. They retorted: We hope that we will be able to kill all the killers of Othman. Sa-eed met Talhah and Al-Zubeir privately and asked them the following question: If you prevail against Ali, whom are you going to make a caliph? Tell me the truth! They told him that the caliphate will be for one of them. Either of them that would be chosen by the people shall be the caliph. Sa-eed suggested to them that they should give the caliphate to one of the children of Othman, because they were going to avenge his blood. They said: We are not going to pass over the elders of the Meccan companions and give the leadership to the orphans. Sa-eed said: "I would not endeavor to take the leadership away from the

children of Abd-Munaf” (whose descendants are the Hashimites and the Omayyads). He went back and so did Abdullah Ibn Khalid Ibn Useid.¹⁹

Sa-eed was hasty. Marwan and his group were trickier than Sa-eed. They were trying to weaken or destroy the caliphate of the Imam, and then eliminate the three leaders.

The Omayyads were much more intelligent than the three leaders, Ayesah, Talhah, and Al-Zubeir. They wanted to use these leaders in order to reach their goal and then sacrifice them. But the three leaders were not aware of what was planned for them. History informs us that Marwan killed Talhah in the Battle of Bassrah.²⁰ Had Al-Zubeir remained alive, he would not have escaped the avenger of the Omayyads.

Talhah and Al-Zubeir did not have any legitimate excuse in their rebellion against the Imam. Talhah was the first one who gave allegiance to the Imam and Al-Zubeir was one of the electors. Yet, when they started their unsuccessful venture, both claimed that they were forced to give their allegiance to the Imam.

WERE TALHAH AND AL-ZUBEIR FORCED TO ELECT THE IMAM?

The Imam was most aware of the human and Islamic rights, and he was too righteous to deprive people of their rights. Every Muslim is entitled to exercise his political freedom and authorize, or refuse to authorize, another person to govern in his name. Every human has the right to refuse to pledge his allegiance to any candidate even if he is elected by the majority. However, such an abstainer should not try to prevent such an elected person from exercising his right to administer the affairs of the people, as long as he governs according to the Islamic laws. A ruler

19. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 107.

20. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 124.

who is elected by the majority is not permitted to force a person to change his vote from "no" to "yes."

***The Imam Did Not Force
Any Companion to Elect Him***

The Imam himself faced difficulties and was subjected to injustice when companions tried to force him to elect Abu Bakr.²¹ Other companions warned him after they selected Othman that he should not incur harm to himself by refusing to vote for Othman.²² The Imam believed that such attempts are violations of his natural rights. The Imam is not expected to do what he used to criticize.

He believed that the Messenger of God had chosen him to lead the nation, and that the duty of the nation is to follow the choice of the Messenger. Yet, he refused to use violence as a means of acquiring leadership when Abu Sufyan offered him to fill Medina with horses and men against Abu Bakr.²³

Saad Ibn Abu Waqass who was a member of the Electoral Convention refused to elect the Imam and said to him: By God, you will see no harm from me. The Imam did not force him to pledge his allegiance to him.²⁴ He did not force Abdullah Ibn Omar to elect him, and he was not less important than Talhah and Al-Zubeir. The Imam asked from him to bring a surety, and when he refused to do that, the Imam said to the people: Leave him, I am his surety. Then he said to him; "You are, as far as I have known you, a man of ill manner in your youth and adult-

21. Abdul-Fattah Abdul-Maqsoud, *Al-Imam Ali Ibn Abu Talib*, part 1, p. 190.

22. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 37.

23. Abdul Fattah Abdul-Macksoud, *Al-Imam Ali Ibn Abu Talib*, part 1, p. 185.

Al-Tabari, in his *History*, part 4, p. 428.

24. Dr. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra*, part 2, p. 22.

Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 428.

hood.²⁵ When he asked him to bring a surety, he wanted only to be sure that the one who refuses to elect him will not try to revolt against him. Osamah Ibn Zeid Ibn Harithah refused to elect the Imam, and the Imam did not try to force him.

Individuals from the natives of Medina also refused to elect the Imam. Among these were Zeid Ibn Thabit, Hassan Ibn Thabit, Muslimah Ibn Mukhlid, Mohammad Ibn Muslima, Naaman Ibn Basheer (who became a supporter of Muaweyah later), Kaab Ibn Ujrah, and Kaab Ibn Malik (who was sent by Othman to collect the Zakat of Muzainah, then he granted him what he collected).²⁶ All these were loyal to Othman and opposed to the Imam. Yet, the Imam did not force any of them to elect him. The Imam would not have given an exceptional treatment to Talhah and Al-Zubeir if they had refused to elect him. The most he could do to them was to ask them to offer a guarantee that they would refrain from any subversive activity.

I do not rule out that the rebels or their leaders had exercised some pressure against the two companions and made them elect the Imam. But such pressure would not have prevented the two companions from saying to the Imam: We are forced to elect you. Had they said that to him, he would not have accepted their election. He was the most knowledgeable of the fact that their election cannot be sound when it is done by force.

The Imam Could Not Force His First Elector

Furthermore, to expect an Imam to force people to elect him, he had to have certain elements: A strong desire to come to power, and a military power through which he could force people to elect him or tremendous wealth with

25. Dr. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra*, part 2, p. 22.

Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 428.

26. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, pp. 429-430.

which he may try to purchase the loyalty of the people. Our Imam was not desirous to come to power, and he did not make himself a candidate. He seriously tried to divert the leadership from himself. He did not accept the caliphate except when it was forced upon him. He did not have a military power or a material wealth through which he could exercise any pressure against individuals or masses of people.

In addition to this, it may be possible for a caliph who has already been elected by the majority to try to force an opponent to vote for him. But it is not conceivable that a candidate tries before he is elected by a majority or a minority to force the first voter to elect him. The story which tells us that Talhah and Al-Zubeir were forced to elect the Imam mentions that Talhah was the first one to pledge his allegiance to the Imam. It tells also that a man called Habib Ibn Thu-aib who was present at that time interpreted the incident to be ominous, saying that the Imam will not succeed because the first hand to give him allegiance was paralyzed (Talhah had a paralyzed finger since the Battle of Ohod).²⁷

The Imam Refuted the Allegation

The Imam refuted the allegations of the two companions in a message he sent to both of them after they left Mecca to Bassrah. In that message he left no excuse for the two companions. "Certainly you have known," he said, "though you have concealed the fact that I did not seek the people until they sought me; nor did I solicit their election, but they elected me. You were from the people who sought me and elected me. The masses of the people did not elect me for a prevailing authority nor for any material wealth. If you had elected me voluntarily, you ought to reverse your attitude and repent to God quickly. If you had elected me unwillingly, you have given me the

27. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 428.

right to demand your obedience when you exhibited your free election and concealed your intention.”²⁸

If the two companions had elected the Imam under pressure from the rebels or other people, they should have at least informed the Imam, at the time of election or at least before they left Medina, that they had elected him unwillingly. They stayed in Medina months after the election and never claimed any coercion. Their silence for the duration of that period is evidence that they elected him voluntarily. They did not refrain from mentioning that because of fear of punishment.

It is one of the known facts in history that Saad Ibn Abu Waqass, who was their colleague in the membership of the Electoral Convention, and Abdullah Ibn Omar did refuse to elect the Imam, and neither of them was punished or threatened by the Imam. Talhah and Al-Zubeir were wealthier and more powerful than Saad and Abdullah. Therefore, the Imam said in his message to the two companions: “Certainly you were not the most entitled from among the ‘Migrants’ (the Meccan companions) to keep silent out of fear. Your refusal to enter into my election could have been easier for you than to exit out of it after acknowledging it . . . ”²⁹

The Guilty Accused the Innocent

However, the two companions did not only claim that they were forced to elect the Imam, but also accused the Imam of the murder of Othman. Yet, they and Ayesah, Mother of the Believers, were the ones who urged people to besiege and kill Othman, and the Imam was the defender of Othman among the Migrant companions. Since people of Medina were aware of this, the Imam concluded his message by the following words:

“And you have alleged that I had killed Othman.

28. Al-Imam Ali, *Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 3, p. 111-112.

29. Al-Imam Ali, *Najhul-Balaghah*, part 3, p. 111-112.

Those who stayed in Medina and did not join you or me ought to be questioned about this matter. Then everyone of us will be burdened with his own action. You, the two old men, ought to reverse your attitude. The most you may suffer now is shame; but if you continue your way, you will add to the shame the Divine punishment.”³⁰

The story of the coercion of Talhah and Al-Zubeir to elect the Imam was obviously untrue. Ali was not the man who would try to force any voter to elect him while he was not yet an elected caliph. The two companions invented the story of coercion to justify their rebellion against the Imam. The two companions who allowed themselves to fight Ali and to kill thousands of Muslims for their own interests would not be expected to refrain from telling untruth deliberately.

30. Al-Imam Ali, *Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 3, 111-112.

The Battle of Bassrah

The period at which the Qureshite community was overwhelmed and lost the political control had elapsed. Quraish woke up after the Brother of the Messenger was elected. Now, this community went on gathering its forces, determined not to let Ali enjoy his leadership and to demolish that leadership regardless of what it may cost the Muslims in blood, unity, and religion.

The Qureshite parties (though neither of them had good intentions towards the other), agreed to wage war against Ali, the Imam of the truth. One of the two parties was led by three leaders who had a high religious position: Ayeshah, the politically-minded wife of the Holy Prophet, Talhah, and Al-Zubeir, who were among the early Muslims with a brilliant record in their endeavor during the days of the prophethood, along with a long companionship of the Holy Prophet.

The other party was the Omayyads led by Muaweyah (governor of Syria). The Omayyads were known (with the exception of a few) to be less religious than other Muslims as they were known for their long and strong hostility towards the Prophet. That hostility continued for most of the years of the prophethood, and the signs of it did not disappear except during the last two years of the life of the Messenger.¹ In spite of that, this party had a tremendous

1. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 2, pp. 165-166.

material power which made it the more dangerous of the two parties.

A Third Party, Governor of Kufa

Both parties declared their open defiance to the Caliph. Both parties made out of the revenge for the death of Othman a slogan, with which they were trying to deceive millions of ignorant Muslims. The two parties were joined by Abu Musa Al-Ashaari in a covered and camouflaged way. As the Imam's appointed governor of Kufa, Abu Musa was able through his malicious method to offer to the two parties tremendous assistance.

However, the three leaders of the first Qureshite party were faster than the second party in their violent hostility. They took the strategy of offense while Muaweyah took the strategy of disobedience and defiance.

The three leaders took the law in their hands and appointed themselves as the high magistrates of the nation and the administrators of its affairs. They went on shedding the blood of the Muslims,² though they were neither heirs nor relatives of the assassinated Caliph. Nor were they elected by the nation.

History recorded the names of the killers of Othman and their number did not exceed five: Soudan Ibn Hamran, Al-Ghafiqi, Qutairah, Kinanah Ibn Bishr Al-Tajeebi and Amr Ibn Al-Hamiq.³ History records that three of them: Kinanah Ibn Bish Al-Tajeebi, Soudan Ibn Hamran, and Qutairah were killed at the same time Othman was murdered.⁴ Thus, only two of them survived Othman. But the three leaders did not go after these two.

2. Dr. Taha Hissein, *Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra*, part 2, p. 39.

Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 111.

3. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 391- and pp. 393-394.

4. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, pp. 89-90.

Al-Tabari, in his *History*, part 4, p. 431.

Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 102.

Ibn Abu-Al-Hadeed, *Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah*, vol. 2, p. 506.

They considered all who attended the besiegement of the Third Caliph from Bassrah, Kufa and Egypt to be of his killers. Yet, most of these came asking the Caliph to make changes and did not come to kill him. They came only to pressure him to change his policy towards handling the public funds and towards his relatives. The few who killed him made their attack on him while the majority of the rebels were unaware of what the few did. His death probably was a shocking surprise to most of those who besieged him.

The three leaders considered all who attended the besiegement partners in his assassination because their presence was an assistance to the murderers. If this logic is sound, then it would have been the duty of the three leaders to go to the Imam and ask him to give them what they deserved of punishment, because they were among the biggest agitators against the Caliph.⁵

A Sweeping Condemnation

The three leaders were not satisfied to kill only the ones who besieged Othman whose number did not exceed twelve hundred from Egypt, Kufa, and Bassrah. Evidently, the three leaders considered every loyal person to the Imam a partner in the murder of Othman. They went to Bassrah and turned thousands of its inhabitants against the Imam, then used them to fight whomever they could reach of the Imam's followers in Bassrah or Kufa. The participants in the siege of Othman from the people of Bassrah did not exceed two hundred persons, and none of them participated directly in killing the Caliph.

The Qureshite war followed a pre-Islamic method. Its purpose was not to kill the killers of Othman but to destroy the caliphate of the Imam. How would they avenge the blood of Othman when they were the ones who urged people to kill him?

5. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 506.
Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 431.

A Warning Prophecy Not Heeded

The three leaders went to Bassrah accompanying three thousand persons, including a thousand Meccans. Othman's former appointed governors supplied them with funds and means of transportation through what they stole from the public funds before they left their posts. Their procession arrived to a water where dogs at that water barked at them. Mother of the Believers, Ayesah, asked about the name of the place. When they told her it was the water of Al-Hou-ab, she realized that she was deviating from the right road, and the prophecy of the great Messenger had been fulfilled. She said "Return me, return me (to Mecca)." Al-Zubeir and his oldest son, Abdullah, confused her by bringing witnesses testifying falsely that the water is not the water of Al-Hou-ab.

It is also reported that she was told that Ali is about to overtake them and they ought to hurry out. Thus, she continued her journey to Bassrah.⁷ Yet she knew that the Imam does not fight anyone that does not fight him. She was too intelligent to believe in the testimony of witnesses who were brought to her by people who justified every means for reaching their end. The voice of the Messenger was still ringing in her ears: "I wish I knew which one of you will be the rider of the huge camel to be barked at by the dogs of Al-Hou-ab, and she would be deviating from the right road." (He was addressing Ayesah and Om Selema), and he turned to Ayesah saying: "Humairah, I have warned you."⁸

Dividing, Killing, and Truce

Finally the procession arrived in Bassrah, and the wife

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6. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra*, part 2, p. 34.
Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 407.
Al-Hakim, in his *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, pp. 119-120.
Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 39.
 7. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 107.
 8. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 120.

of the Messenger was able (through her position with the Messenger of God and her father being the First Caliph) to divide the people of Bassrah, after they had given their allegiance to the Imam. The three leaders' party and the party of the governor of Bassrah, Othman Ibn Huneif, fought each other, then agreed on a temporary truce. This truce was violated by the three leaders when they attacked the followers of Ibn Huneif, then forced him out of the leadership of the prayer at the Mosque and slaughtered many of his guards, then occupied the governor's office and massacred their opponents.⁹ Their opponents were not the killers of the Caliph Othman, but they were loyal to the Imam.

The Contents of the Truce Agreement

Al-Tabari in his History reported that the truce pact which was made between Ibn Huneif on one hand, and Talhah and Al-Zubeir on the other hand, contained the agreement to send a messenger from Bassrah to Medina, seeking information from its inhabitants whether Talhah and Al-Zubeir elected Ali voluntarily or by force. If people of Medina testified that the two companions were forced to elect Ali, the city of Bassrah shall be under control of the two companions, and Ibn Huneif should leave his post. If people of Medina testify that the two companions elected the Imam voluntarily, the governor, Ibn Huneif, would stay in his post and Talhah and Al-Zubeir could stay in Bassrah under the control of the Imam if they want, and if they choose to leave Bassrah they could.¹⁰

The messenger of the two parties to Medina was Kaab Ibn Soor, a former judge of Bassrah. When he asked people of Medina about the two companions' election of the

9. *Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra*, part 2, p. 39.

Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 468.

Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 111.

10. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 467.

Imam, people did not answer his question except Osamah Ibn Zeid Ibn Harithah. He stated that they elected Ali unwillingly and under coercion. Sahl Ibn Huneif (brother of Othman Ibn Huneif, governor of Bassrah), and others attacked Osamah Ibn Zeid, but Osamah was defended by a few people who were from the opposition of the Imam, and Osamah was taken to his home without being hurt.¹¹

Al-Tabari recorded that when the Imam knew about what took place in Medina, he sent to Othman Ibn Huneif a message in which he blamed him for his inefficiency and told him in the message: "By God, they were not forced for a division. They were forced for unity and good. If they want to declare their disobedience, they have no excuse; and if they want something else, we may consider the matter."¹²

When the message of the Imam came to Othman Ibn Huneif, and Ibn Soor came with his news from Medina, Talhah and Al-Zubeir sent to Othman Ibn Huneif to leave his post and his office. Othman refused to do so, saying that what the Imam brought up is different from what they had agreed upon. Upon this, Talhah and Al-Zubeir and their supporters made their attack at the Mosque, then they attacked the governor and prevailed against him. They occupied his office and the city of Bassrah, then took over the treasury. This was followed by a massacre.¹³ The three leaders aimed at liquidating their opponents. Ibn Huneif was taken prisoner. They tortured him and pulled the hair off his beard and wanted to kill him.

Al-Tabari in reporting these events, relied on the narration of Seif Ibn Omar, who alleged to have taken his information from Mohammad (Ibn Oun) and Talhah.

Knowing the Imam's method of conducting himself, we ought to discredit this report. The Imam was not a man who would take a pledge of loyalty from a person who was forced to give it.

11. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 468.

12. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, pp. 468-69.

13. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra*, part 2, p. 36.

We have already substantiated that the claim of coercion by Talhah and Al-Zubeir was unfounded. The reporter of this story was Seif Ibn Omar who was discredited by many historians and hadith recorders, and some of them declared him as one of the forgers of the history, and some of them accused him of being a heretic.¹⁴ We shall deal with this in the following chapter.

Forcing Two Persons Does Not Nullify the Election

Assuming that the two companions were forced to elect the Imam, this would allow them only to withhold from the Imam their assistance if he seeks it. It would not allow them to hinder the Imam from exercising his rule as the administrator of the affairs of the nation after he was elected by the overwhelming majority from the companions of the Prophet.

Forcing two persons to elect an Imam does not cancel the whole election or the legitimacy of his caliphate. Al-Zubeir was forced to give his allegiance to Abu Bakr when Abu Bakr was elected. Historians reported that Al-Zubeir came out from the house of Ali drawing his sword in the faces of the attackers saying: "Ali has the right more than anyone to the caliphate." The attackers took the sword from his hand and led him to Abu Bakr and made him give his allegiance to him by force.¹⁵ Forcing Al-Zubeir at that time did not cancel the legitimacy of Abu Bakr's election, in spite of the fact that his election was a "Faltah" (an incident that came without preparation or planning) according to the testimony of Omar Ibn Al-Khattab.¹⁶

Would it have been legitimate at that time for Al-

14. Sayed Murtadah Al-Askari, *Abdullah Ibn Saba*, second edition, p. 26.

15. Ibn Abu Al-Hadeed, his *Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 6, p. 11 (printed in 1965 by the House of Resurrection of the Arabic Books).

16. Al-Bukhari, his *Sahih*, part 6, p. 195.
Imam Ahmad, his *Musnad*, part 1, p. 17.

Zubeir to go to Mecca, for example, and occupy it and drive Abu Bakr's appointed governor from Mecca by force? I do not believe that Al-Zubeir could claim that this was legal for him to do. I do not think that anyone from the companions would agree with him if he had claimed the right to do that. Had he done this, he would have been fought and considered to be a divider of the Muslim community. Why should it be legitimate for him and Talhah to fight the Imam and drive his appointed governor out of Bassrah and occupy a city whose people pledged their allegiance to him?

Illegal Agreement

If Ibn Huneif had agreed with the two companions voluntarily on the contents of the alleged pact of the temporary truce, he would have committed a grave mistake. This is because his agreement with the two companions represents a negligence of the trust which the Imam put in the hand of Ibn Huneif and because it is an agreement on dividing the nation. This is abhorable to God and His Messenger.

Granted that Ibn Huneif agreed on that. This could not make it legitimate for the two companions and for the Mother of the Believers to implement the contents of the agreement because it contained a pledge to commit a major sin. If Ibn Huneif had breached the pact between him and the two companions after the Imam reprimanded him, he would have only fulfilled his duty. This is because the contents of the pact are unjustifiable in Islam.

If the two companions wanted out of their occupation of Bassrah to make one of them a caliph, the Faith of Islam does not allow them to do so. Muslim reported in his *Sahih* that Abu Sa-eed Al-Khidri said that the Messenger of God said: "If two caliphs are elected, kill the latter of the two."¹⁷ Muslim reported also that the Messenger said: "Whoever stood in open disobedience and parted

17. Muslim, his *Sahih*, part 6, p. 195.

with the bulk of the community, then dies, he would die a pre-Islamic death.”¹⁸

THE IMAM’S JOURNEY

Muaweyah declared his open defiance to the Imam, and the Imam found his confrontation with Muaweyah inevitable. Therefore, he went on trying to mobilize an army in order to subdue this dangerous rebellion. While he was dealing with this crisis, he received the news of the journey of the three leaders to Iraq. He changed his plan. The Imam found it necessary to give priority to the crisis of the three leaders. The providence of Iraq was the most important among the Islamic provinces for the caliphate. Should the three leaders occupy Iraq while the Syrian province is controlled by Muaweyah, the Imam would have lost most of the moral, material and military forces in the Muslim World.

The Imam, facing this crisis, was fifty-eight years old. His relatively old age did not diminish his determination, bravery, and his fast response to the big problems and facing them with proper solutions. During the days of the Messenger, he was his right arm, the one who solved his problems and subdued his enemies. Now after twenty-five years during which he was in actual retirement, he returns with his well-known capabilities to face crises, but on a larger scale. The forces he had to face at this period were uncomparably greater than what he used to face in the days of the Prophet.

Unprecedented Test

The struggle between right and wrong was and still is difficult for the followers of the truth. People of the right camp are usually in the minority. The wrong side has its own attraction as it has fruits which the people of its camp can pick quickly. The truth is not tempting, and the

18. Muslim, his *Sahih*, part 6, p. 195.

strength of its followers springs from their belief in God, the Day of Judgment, and their determination to sacrifice.

The difficulties which the camp of truth faces increase greatly when people are confounded, unable to distinguish between right and wrong. Under such circumstances, the truth loses the assistance of people with good intention who would be helpful if the right road were clear to them. On the other hand, the wrong camp wins certain forces which could have been antagonistic to it if they had known that it is the wrong camp. People of good intention may stay neutral because they do not know which side is right. Their neutrality decreases the number of the supporters of truth, and the wrong party would be relieved of the burden of combating these good people, due to their neutrality.

This is what happened to the camp of truth which the Imam was leading. It was the first time it took place in the Islamic history. It never happened during the days of the Prophethood, nor did it happen during the days of the Three Caliphs who preceded the Imam.

The Holy Prophet faced many enemies, but the separation between him and his enemies was as clear as the separation between day and night. He is the Messenger and his followers are the believers in his message, and his enemies are the pagans and the rest of the unbelievers who declared their disbelief in his message. There was no possibility to lose the distinction between right and wrong.

Abu Bakr faced at the beginning of his reign forces that declared their desertion of the Faith of Islam. Thus, there was no room for any confusion between right and wrong. When the war of desertion ended, the First Caliph had to face forces that did not believe in Islam and declared their animosity towards its message. And so was the situation during the days of Omar and Othman. Right and wrong, distinguished from each other like day and night.

The Imam Ali, on the contrary, had to face hostile forces which belonged to the Faith of Islam and declared their belief in its Book and offered the five prayers and paid Zakat. Furthermore, one of the camps of those forces

was led by three people whom the Muslims highly respected because of their companionship to the Prophet or for being related to him by marriage.

Thus, it became difficult for the masses of the people and even for some of the knowledgeable people to distinguish between the camp of the truth and that of falsehood. The history of the three leaders attracted tens of thousands of people and made them side with them against the well-guided Imam while they were thinking that they were right and that he was wrong.

Had Ali come to power immediately after the death of the Holy Prophet, his confrontation with Talhah, Al-Zubeir and Ayeshah could have been easier than his confrontation with them twenty-five years later. During the early years after the Prophet, people still remembered the distinctions of Ali, his great endeavor in the way of God and his position with the Holy Prophet, and the Prophet's declarations about him. By the passage of more than two decades after the death of the Prophet, people had forgotten Ali's distinctions. He was away from the political arena and in actual retirement.

People of Bassrah and Kufa probably knew about Talhah and Al-Zubeir more than they did about the Imam Ali. Talhah and Al-Zubeir had many properties and big investments in both cities. Even Al-Zubeir forgot that the Holy Prophet had told him that he will fight Ali while unjust to him. This explains the word of the Imam which he uttered before he was elected: ". . . For we are facing a crisis with many faces and colors. The hearts do not stand to it and the minds do not rest with it."

As the crisis which was precipitated by the movement of the three leaders had such great dimensions, it was the duty of the Imam to face it with all his forces. Therefore, he left Medina with a few hundred volunteers, hoping that he will overtake the leaders and their followers before reaching Iraq and prevent them from implementing their plan.

When he arrived to Rabatha, he realized that they had already passed it and gone towards Bassrah. However, he

believed that their invasion of Bassrah was less harmful than invading Kufa where the most important Arab forces were settled.

He went on until he arrived to Thee Qar. He sojourned there after he sent a message to the people of Kufa urging them to join him for the sake of bringing peace, preventing evil and supporting truth.

The three leaders were already in control of Bassrah. They drove Othman Ibn Huneif out of his office. Othman came to Thee Qar. When he met the Imam, he told him: "Ameer Al-Mumineen, when you sent me to Bassrah I was bearded, but I returned to you without a beard." The Imam said to him:

"May God reward you for what you have suffered. Two persons before me ruled the people and both followed the Book; then the third one followed them. People spoke about him and dealt with him the way they did. Then they elected me. Talhah and Al-Zubeir elected me, then they breached their covenant with me and instigated people against me. It is one of the wonders that they obeyed Abu Bakr and Omar and now they antagonize me. By God, they know that I am not less than any of those who passed away. God, I ask Thee to untie what they knotted and abort what they plotted and make them meet the evil consequences of what they have done."¹⁹

ABU MUSA AL-ASHAARI

After the three leaders' party occupied the City of Bassrah, Ayesah, Mother of believers, took a further step. She wrote to the leaders of Kufa, informing them that her party had already occupied Bassrah, urging them to avenge the blood of Othman, and discouraging them from supporting the Imam.²⁰ Of course, she wrote to Abu Musa (the Imam's appointed governor of the city) and asked him to use his influence in preventing the Kufites from sending any recruits to the army of the Imam. Abu

19. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 480.

20. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 480.

Musa did not need anyone to urge him to do that. He was not loyal to the Imam; nor was he a believer in his right.

The messages of the Mother of Believers to the Kufites had their effects. It divided them. Some of them called for the support of the Imam, and some of them called for staying out of the dispute or for supporting the three leaders. Abu Musa spoke to the people repeatedly, warning them and advising them not to enter into any battle for the support of the Imam. He reported to them that he heard the Messenger of God saying: "There shall be a faith-testing crisis in which the less participation the better." Then he told them: "Sheath the swords, give refuge to the oppressed until people are united and the cloud of crisis clears up."²¹

Had the Kufites obeyed Abu Musa, the Imam could not have faced the crisis with any considerable strength. He had only a small army when he arrived to the area of Thee-Qar. It is amazing that history did not record that Abu Musa ever criticized the three leaders for invading and occupying Bassrah and pushing people to the Faith-testing crisis which he used to mention so often. Evidently, Abu Musa shared with the three leaders their opinion, and he wanted the Muslims to approve their usurping the authority from the Imam and breaching their covenant with him after they pledged their allegiance to him.

Abu Musa used to report the hadith of the crisis as if he had a special knowledge of it. Yet, the Holy Qur'an declared the following:

"Do the people think that they will be left alone when they say: 'We have believed', without being tested? Certainly, We have tested generations before them. Thus, God would know the people of truth and the untrue ones."²²

21. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 116.

22. The Holy Qur'an, chapter 29, verses 2-3.

Abu Musa Misinterpreted His Own Report

It seems that Abu Musa reported a statement he attributed to the Prophet, but he did not understand what it meant. If the Messenger had uttered the words which Abu Musa reported, the Prophet had meant that there will be a devious and confusing movement in the Muslim society, and that the duty of the Muslims will be to discourage its people and to let the people of that innovation down, by denying them any support.

The Messenger did not mean that the good believers should not resist the people of innovation when their movement becomes dangerous to the unity of the nation and when they shed the blood of the Muslims. Otherwise, the Prophet would be calling upon the nation to approve the devious movement and let them succeed in reaching their goal and usurping the power and administering the affairs of the Muslims after they acquire what they seek of power.

Abu Musa Disagreed with the Qur'an

Had Abu Musa understood the words of the Messenger, he would have known that those who entered Bassrah and usurped from the Imam his authority and drove his appointed governor out of Bassrah are the people of the devious movement who should be denied all support. He should have known that when those people divided the Muslims, the duty of the Muslims was to fight them because they are people of invitation to an un-Islamic movement and to a rebellion against the legitimate Imam in whose name Abu Musa was ruling Kufa. Abu Musa reported the hadith which he claimed to have heard from the Prophet and forgot what the Holy Qur'an clearly declared, that the nation is dutybound to fight a Muslim party that commits an aggression against another Islamic party:

“If two parties among the believers fall into a quarrel, make ye peace between them; but if one of them trans-

gresses beyond bounds against the other, then fight the one that transgresses until it complies with the command of God. But if it complies, then make peace between them with justice and be fair. For God loves those who are fair and just.”²³

Abu Musa also forgot another verse which makes it mandatory to obey the Imam and support him:

“O ye who believe, obey God, and obey His Apostle and the people of authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to God and His Apostle, if ye do believe in God and the last Day. That is best and most suitable for finer determination.”²⁴

This verse makes it mandatory for Abu Musa and every Muslim to obey the Imam.

Obedience of the leader of the believers is mandatory to every Muslim unless the leader calls upon people to disobey God. The verse also commands that a matter of dispute should be referred to the Book of God and the instruction of the Messenger. The Imam Ali was the leader of the Muslim nation, and he did not invite people to disobey God. He rather called upon them to obey Him. His aim was to unite the Muslims, and the aim of his opponents was to turn people against him and to divide the nation.

Which Faith-testing Crisis?

However, there were many confounding crises that took place in the history of Islam before the election of the Imam and after his departure from this world. The Prophet, in the statement which Abu Musa attributed to him did not name that crisis. How did Abu Musa know that the crisis which the Prophet meant was the crisis which took place during the days of the Imam’s reign?

It is not reported that the Prophet ordered Ali to be in-

23. The Holy Qur’an, chapter 49, verse 9.

24. The Holy Qur’an, chapter 4, verse 58.

active in the face of confounding crises which were to take place during the days of his reign. On the contrary, he commanded him to fight and commanded the believers to follow him. Al-Hakim in his *Mustadrak* (part 3, page 139) recorded that Abu Ayyoub Al-Ansari reported during the days of Omar that the Messenger ordered Ali to fight the breachers (of the pact of allegiance), the Unjust party, and the Seceders' party; and that Abu Ayyoub asked the Messenger, saying: "With whom shall we fight these parties?" The Messenger replied: "With Ali Ibn Abu Talib." Al-Hakim recorded also that Abu Sa-eed Al-Khidri reported that the Messenger of God said that Ali shall fight for the interpretation of the Holy Qur'an as I fought for its revelation.

***Abu Musa Appointed Himself
a Counselor
to the Nation and the Imam***

His words indicate clearly that he accused the Imam of being a partner in the confounding crisis about which he spoke. His words indicate also that he accused the Imam with either the lack of knowledge of the instructions of the Messenger or disobedience of the Prophet's instructions, or with both lack of knowledge and disobedience. Yet the Messenger said: "I am the city of knowledge and Ali is the gate of that city; whoever wishes to enter the city, should come through its gate."²⁵

Abu Musa Persisted in His Error

It may be said that Abu Musa was following Abdullah Ibn Omar whom he used to love and whom he recommended for leadership. Abdullah Ibn Omar stood neutral in the dispute between Ali and his opponents. He did not support the truth. Nor did he fight the untruth. But then he found himself failing to follow the Book of God. Therefore, he repented and changed his attitude towards

25. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 127.

Ali. Al-Hakim recorded in his *Al-Mustadrak* through his channel to Al-Zuhri who reported that Hamzah said the following:

“While he (Hamzah) was sitting with Abdullah Ibn Omar a man from Iraq came to Ibn Omar. He said: Abu Abdul-Rahman (a code name of Ibn Omar), by God, I have been seriously trying to follow you and take an attitude similar to yours towards the division of the nation and be neutral as far as I could. Yet, I have read a verse from the Holy Qur’an which occupied my mind, and I would like you to inform me about it. I mean the Word of God: ‘If two parties among the believers fall into a quarrel, make ye peace between them; if one of them transgresses beyond bounds against the other, then fight ye (all) against the one that transgresses until it complies with the command of God. But if it complies, then make peace between them with justice, and be fair. For God loves those who are fair and just.’

“Please inform me how to comply with this verse. Abdullah said: ‘You have nothing to do with this. Go away.’ The man left and when he disappeared, Abdullah turned to us saying: ‘I never found in my heart something as I felt about this verse, that I did not fight the aggressor party as God commanded me to do.’ ”²⁶

Al-Hakim commented on this report, saying: “This is an important hadith reported by many outstanding tabi-is (good religious scholars who did not witness the Prophet and took their knowledge from his companions). I have chosen the channel of Shu-aib Ibn Abu Hamzah to Al-Zuhri because the two Sheikhs (Al Bukhari and Muslim) used this channel which indicated that this is truly authentic.”

Thus, Abdullah Ibn Omar repented for his wrong stand in the quarrel between Ali and his opponents, but Abu Musa did not repent.

26. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 115.

Abu Musa Did Not Distinguish Between Hadith and Qur'an

However, I am not confident that Abu Musa conveyed the statement of the Messenger as the Messenger pronounced it. And we find that Abu Musa reported to the people of Bassrah when he was their governor something contrary to the truth and denied by all Muslims. Muslim in his Sahih reported the following:

“Abu Musa Al-Ashaari summoned the readers of Bassrah. Three hundred readers of the Holy Qur'an came to him. He said to them: “You are the righteous men of Bassrah and the readers of the Qur'an. Let not the passage of time make you forget the truth. Thus, your hearts will be hardened. We used to read a chapter similar to the chapter of Bara-ah in length and seriousness, and I have forgotten it. However, I remember of that chapter only the following verse:

‘Should Ibn Adam acquire two valleys full of money, he would seek a third valley. And the abdomen of Ibn Adam would not be filled but by soil.’

“And we used to read a chapter which was similar to the chapters which are begun with the word: “Sabbaha,” and I have forgotten it. I remember of it only the following: ‘O you who believe, why do you say what you do not do? Testimony will be written on your necks, then you would be questioned about it on the Day of Judgement.’”²⁷

The words which Abu Musa reported are certainly not from the Holy Qur'an; nor do they resemble the Qur'anic words in the least. The best guess is that Abu Musa was disturbed in his thinking, unable sometimes to distinguish between the Qur'an and the hadith. And when he reported a hadith, he was not accurate nor could he understand it.

I believe that Abu Musa was a part of the conspiracy of Talhah, Al-Zubeir, Ayesah, and Muaweyah Ibn Abu Sufyan. He was trying his best to destroy the caliphate

27. Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, part 7 (Book of Zakat), p. 139-140.

of the Imam. Had he succeeded in convincing the Kufites to sit and refrain from supporting the Imam, the reign of the Imam would have ended in the first year after his election. It is obvious that the Imam did not trust Abu Musa, and that he knew his negative attitude towards the members of the House of the Prophet in general and towards him in particular.

When the Imam was elected, he sent Imarah Ibn Shihab, one of the companions, as a governor of Kufa to replace Abu Musa. But Imarah came back to Medina after Tulaihah Ibn Khuwailid threatened him before his arrival to Kufa . . . ²⁸ (During the short period that took place after the death of Othman, there was no security for people.) The Imam then kept Abu Musa upon the request of Al-Ashtar. Abu Musa was a Yemenite and most of the Kufites were Yemenites.

The Imam sent Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr and Muhammad Ibn Jaafar to the Kufites, asking them to join him in his journey to Bassrah and to be supporters and helpers to the religion of God. He told them also that he wanted to bring peace and reunite the nation. The two messengers did not succeed, and the attitude of Abu Musa was the biggest obstacle in the way of their mission.

When they challenged him, he spoke his mind saying: By God, your man and I still owe allegiance to Othman. If fighting is inevitable, then we should not fight anyone until we finish the killers of Othman wherever they may be.²⁹

Thus, Abu Musa believed that he owed allegiance to Othman even after Othman died, but he did not believe that he owed any loyalty or obedience to the living Imam, and that he did not have to respond to his call. He believed that if the fight is necessary, they had to fight the killers of Othman. But the three leaders who were the first to call for the murder of Othman should not be fought even if

28. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 103.

29. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 482.

they usurp the authority of the Imam in Bassrah, and people should not challenge them.

Abu Musa spoke his mind also on another occasion when Abd Kheir Al-Haiwani said to him: "Did Talhah and Al-Zubeir not give Ali a pledge of Allegiance?" When Abu Musa replied in the affirmative, Abd Kheir asked him: "Did Ali commit any wrong-doing which allows the two companions to breach their covenant with him?" Abu Musa replied: "I do not know." Abd Kheir said: "We leave you until you know."³⁰ He took this attitude in order to preserve for the three leaders their gains against the Imam. Had he spoken the truth, he would have admitted that the two companions had breached their covenant with the Imam without any justification. But this would damage his interest and their interest. It is also reported that the two messengers sent Hashim Ibn Utbah Ibn Abu Waqass to the Imam to inform him of what took place. The messenger returned to Thee Qar where the Imam was and informed him of what had taken place.

The Key to the Solution

It became clear to the Imam that Abu Musa was the biggest obstacle and that his dismissal is the key to the solution of the problem. The Imam could not lead a respectable army as long as the Kufites listened to Abu Musa. Therefore, he sent to him a letter with Hashim Ibn Utbah, saying to him: "Send people to me. I did not appoint you governor except to have you as my assistant for establishing the truth." Abu Musa refused to do so and Hashim wrote to the Imam the following: "I have come to a man who is a radical disputer, open in hatred." The Imam sent Al-Hassan and Ammar Ibn Yasir to urge people to join the Imam. He wrote to Abu Musa: "I have sent Qurthah Ibn Kaab as governor of Kufa. Leave your post, blamed and defeated. If you defy him and he prevails against you, I commanded him to execute you. Abu Musa

30. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 486.

left his post and Al-Hassan and Ammar went on in their mission and people of Kufa responded to their call.³¹

It is reported also that Abu Musa did not leave his post and persisted in his defiance until Al-Ashtar joined Al-Hassan and Ammar because he felt that he was responsible for keeping Abu Musa in his post when he requested the Imam to keep him in that post. When Abu Musa unveiled his malicious intentions, Al-Ashtar said to the Imam: "Ameer Al-Mumineen, may God honor you. With your permission, I would like to join them (Al-Hassan and Ammar); I believe that the Kufites are very obedient to me. If I go there, I hope that none of them will disagree with me." The Imam honored his request. He went there and called upon everyone he met to join him in his march on the mansion of the governor. He entered the mansion with a large group while Abu Musa was standing at the main mosque speaking to his audience, discouraging them from supporting the Imam, and reporting to them what he claimed to have heard from the Prophet concerning the confounding crisis, and that the one who does not participate is better than the one who does. Ammar Ibn Yasir was responding to him by saying: The Messenger of God told only you that not taking part in it is better than your participation. Then Ammar said: God prevails against those who try to fight Him.

The servants of Abu Musa came running to the mosque saying: Abu Musa, Al-Ashtar entered the mansion, beat us up and drove us out. When Abu Musa came down and entered the mansion, Al-Ashtar shouted: "Get out of our mansion. May God get your soul out of your body. By God, you are of the early hypocrites." Abu Musa said: Give me a respite only this evening. Al-Ashtar granted him that, saying: You will not stay tonight at the mansion. People entered into the mansion, trying to loot Abu Musa's belongings, but Al-Ashtar prevented them, saying: I granted him my protection.³²

31. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, pp. 499-500.

32. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, pp. 486-487.

Thus, the Imam needed to use force in order to remove Abu Musa from his post because Abu Musa was not like the rest of the appointed officials. He was a conspirator against the Imam disguised as his appointed governor. Had he been really scrupulous about war and blood shedding, he should have sided with the Imam because the Imam was still far from entering a battle. He was seeking peace and unity, while the three leaders had already shed a great deal of blood. Abu Musa approved what the three leaders did and tried anxiously to preserve for them their bloody gains by urging people of Kufa not to join the Imam. Yet, the Imam was asking people to come to him in order to assist him if he is right and to correct him if he is wrong.

Thus, we can easily conclude that Abu Musa was not a man of peace, or against war. He was rather against the Imam, collaborating with his enemies. The Imam was trying to prevent war, while the three whom Abu Musa was trying to protect, had already started their bloody battle before the Imam's arrival to Thee Qar. Of the words which the Imam said to the people of Kufa when they met him at Thee Qar are the following:

“I have invited you to witness with us the behavior of our brothers in Bassrah. If they change their attitude, this is what we want. If they persist in their wrong way, we shall not agree with them, but we shall try peaceful avenues, preferring them to the avenue of war (unless they force it upon us). There is no power but that of God.”³³

I have given Abu Musa this lengthy discussion because his hostile stand toward the Imam was a factor in shaping the events of that period. He performed a very dangerous role whose consequences were detrimental to the Muslim World.

Finally, a group of Kufites (numbering twelve thousand) came to join the Imam. Al-Tabari, Ibn Al-Atheer, and other historians along with a number of hadith recorders reported that the Imam said before the arrival of

33. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 118.

the Kufites:" Twelve thousand and one men will come to you from Kufa." Abu Al-Tufail, a companion, who reported this hadith said: "I stood at Thee Qar, counting those men. I found them to be twelve thousand and one men."³⁴

Kufa was able to send to the Imam tens of thousands of its men if it were not for the stand of Abu Musa and the messages of Ayeshah. Her religious place, and the place of Talhah and Al-Zubeir in the minds of the Muslims were factors in discouraging the Kufites from joining the camp of the Imam. When the Imam neared Bassrah, a group from Abdul Qeise joined him.³⁵ And after all that, the Imam's army did not exceed twenty thousand, while the three leaders' army according to estimates was a minimum of thirty thousand.³⁶

THE IMAM'S EFFORT FOR PEACE

As expected, the Imam did not start a battle against his opponents in Bassrah. All legitimate avenues of peace must be explored, although his opponents had shed enough blood to justify fighting them. He wanted to confine the crisis and bring it to an end. Thousands of Muslims were confounded and confused because of the religious position of his opponents; therefore, he wanted to leave no excuse for his opponents and to make the right path clear to the masses of the Muslims.

Historians recorded that the Imam sent Al-Qaaqaa Ibn Amr as his special envoy to the three leaders to speak to them and offer them peace. Al-Qaaqaa was a man of wisdom and prestige, and he was not accused of anything concerning Othman. He went on his mission and it appeared to him that he convinced the three leaders to accept

34. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 500, and p. 501 and p. 505 in sequel.

35. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, pp. 500-501, and p. 505 in sequel.

36. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, pp. 500-501, and p. 505 in sequel.

peace and give the Imam a pledge of allegiance and reunite the Muslims, after the death of Othman and the events of Bassrah had divided them. As for what the three leaders spoke of concerning the killers of Othman, the Imam was supposed to consider it at a later stage.³⁷

The ambassador came back to the Imam and informed him of the result of his negotiations with the three leaders, and the Imam hoped that some good will come out of the negotiations. Thus, he went to Bassrah. To his disappointment, he found his opponents closer to war than to peace and that their military preparation was bigger than his. They had already gathered an army of thirty thousand fighters.³⁸

Al-Zubeir Lost Determination

The determination of Al-Zubeir to fight was shaken up when he learned that Ammar Ibn Yasir was with the Imam's army. When a man informed him that he saw Ammar Ibn Yasir with the Imam's army and that he spoke to him, Al-Zubeir refused to believe that. But the man assured him time after time that Ammar was there. Al-Zubeir sent a member of his family to see whether this was true. When his messenger came back, confirming the truth of the information, Al-Zubeir said: "This broke my back." He lost his nerve and a tremor violently shook his body. Even the weapons which he was carrying started to shake. It was well known to Al-Zubeir and the rest of the companions that the Prophet said to Ammar: "Ammar, be cheerful. The aggressor party will kill you, and your last drink from this world is a drink of milk." Realizing that Ammar was with the army of the Imam, Al-Zubeir became frightened.³⁹

37. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, pp. 119-120.

Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, pp. 488-489.

38. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 501.

39. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, pp. 510-511.

The Imam in Dialogue with His Opponents

In spite of this, Al-Zubeir stayed with his party. The Imam wanted to make it clear to him and to his colleague Talhah, that they were wrong. He met them between the two camps while each of them was riding his horse, and people were looking at them. The Imam was completely unarmed, and Al-Zubeir was fully armed. The Imam wanted to show people that his goal is peace rather than war. His opponents declared their rebellion against him under the pretext of avenge for Othman for the sake of God. The Imam tried to remind them of God, and the following dialogue occurred:

The Imam: "Certainly you have prepared arms, horses, and men," he said to the two companions while he and they were on their horses. "I do not know whether you have prepared an excuse when you meet your Lord on the Day of Judgment. Fear God, and be not like a woman who unspun her strands after she had strongly spun it. Was I not your brother and you used to believe in the sanctity of my blood and I believed in the sanctity of your blood? Did I do anything that makes it legitimate for you to shed my blood?"⁴⁰

Then he said to Al-Zubeir: What brought you here? Al-Zubeir: You have brought me here, and I do not believe that you are qualified to be caliph. You have no more right than we have to be caliphs. And you killed Othman.

Reminiscence of a Prophecy

The Imam: "You believe that Othman was more qualified than I? We used to count you from the children of Abdul-Muttalib (Al-Zubeir was the son of Safeyah, daughter of Abdul Muttalib), until your son Abdullah, the evil son, separated you from us. Zubeir, do you hold me responsible for the blood of Othman while you were his killer? May God punish today our harshest to Oth-

40. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 501.

man.” Then the Imam said to him: “Do you remember the day when you were with the Messenger of God passing through the area of Banu Ghunam and he smiled at me, and I smiled at him, then you said to him: ‘Ibn Abu Talib is always conceited.’ The Messenger of God said: ‘He is not conceited, and you shall fight him unjustly.’”⁴¹

Al-Zubeir: By God, yes, I remember that now, and had I remembered that before, I would not have come here. By God, I will never fight you.

Talhah was expected to take the same attitude as Al-Zubeir. The Messenger foretold Al-Zubeir that he will fight Ali while he is unjust, and that certainly goes to Talhah whose stand towards the Imam was like that of Al-Zubeir, but more violent and unjust. But Talhah was not affected by all that. He stuck to his hard line.⁴²

The Bassrah camp began to shoot and kill men from Ali’s camp. The followers of the Imam began to ask and beg him to permit them to fight and the Imam refused time after time.

The Imam Offered the Arbitration of the Qur’an

Finally, the Imam held a copy of the Holy Qur’an and asked: Who is willing to hold this Qur’an and invite the other camp to follow what is in it and he should know that he will be killed? A young man from Kufa volunteered to take the mission, and the Imam turned his back to him. He repeated his question and no one was willing to take that mission except the young man. The Imam gave him the Qur’an and commanded him to tell the opposite camp: This is the Book of God between us and you from its beginning to its end. Fear God for our blood and your blood. The Kufan youth did what the Imam told him to do and the Bassrites shot and killed him. With this flagrant

41. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 511.

42. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 509.

aggression, the Imam declared: "Now it is legal for us to fight them."⁴³

THE BEGINNING OF THE BATTLE

"By God, I did not commit any sin for which they could criticize me; nor did they put between them and me a fair judge. They are seeking a right which they have neglected and trying to avenge a blood which they have shed. Certainly they are the aggressor party which was predicted by the Prophet to include a man and woman who are related to each other through marriage.

"By God, I shall prepare for them a basin which I will fill. They will drink out of it, without quenching their thirst, and it will be their last drink. God, the two men (Talhah and Al-Zubeir) have faced me with open hostility, dealt with me unjustly, breached their pledge of allegiance to me and instigated people against me. God, I ask Thee to untie what they knotted and invalidate what they plotted and make them meet disappointment in their expectation and action. I have tried to secure their repentance to prevent hostility and gave them a respite before the battle began. They ignored the gracious overture and rejected peace." (The Imam Ali, *Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 2, page 19).

The Imam was not a man to be intimidated by war, nor frightened by the quantity of enemies. Talhah and Al-Zubeir and their thirty thousand soldiers would not terrify him. He was still the same hero who brought the Arabs to their knees during the days of the Holy Prophet, and the years did not increase in him but bravery and determination. He had known through information from the Messenger that this battle was coming and that his enemies were the aggressor party which the Prophet described to include the man and the woman who are related to each

43. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 511.

other through marriage rather than birth (Al-Zubeir was married to Asma, sister of Ayeshah).

***The Imam Knew
His Killer's Description***

When he faced Al-Zubeir unarmed, the Imam was asked: How did you face Al-Zubeir unarmed and he was well armed, knowing his bravery? "Al-Zubeir is not my killer," he replied. "My killer is obscure, from a low family. He will kill me but not on a battlefield. Woe to his mother. He will wish that his mother had been bereaved by his death. Certainly he is as wicked as the killer of the Female Camel of the Prophet Salih." (The Camel of Salih was created miraculously and was killed by one of the most wicked men in history.)

Although he knew that his opponents shall fight him, he offered them peace and called upon them to change their attitude. He was determined to use all means available to him in order to prevent bloodshed.

Should they refuse his peaceful proposal and persist in their hostile way, he was determined to prepare for them a deadly basin which he will fill. He would be the one to fill it, and they would come out of it without quenching their thirst. Then he asked the Almighty to untie what they knotted and to show them the evil consequences of their deed and the disappointment in what they expected; and God responded to his prayer.

Historians disagree about the duration of the Battle of Bassrah, whether it was one day or more. Whatever the time of its duration, it was one of the ugliest and most violent battles. It was unique in its effect in dividing the Muslims. For the first time history witnessed the Muslims standing in two camps, fighting each other, and thousands of them fell by the swords of each other.

The battle started and appeared to be short, and the losses seemed to be light. The general offense which the army of the Imam started was stormy. It shook the Bassrite camp and compelled the thousands of the soldiers of

the three leaders to run away before the middle of the day. Talhah was shot by a deadly arrow which made him bleed to death. It is reported that Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam killed him.⁴⁴

Talhah's Death

Jundab Ibn Abdullah Al-Azdi reported that he witnessed Talhah accompanied by a band of fighters, and many of them were wounded and they were overwhelmed by people. Talhah himself was wounded. He was holding a sword, and his followers were leaving him one after another, and he was saying: "Servants of God, patience, patience, there is only victory and reward after patience." I told him: "May your mother be bereaved by your death. Go away to safety. By God, you would not be victorious, nor would you have any reward. You have only sinned and lost." Then I shouted at his followers and they were surprised and left him. Then I told him: By God, if I want to, I can kill you here. He replied: By God, if you do that, you would perish in this world and in the Hereafter. I said: By God, your blood has become legal to us, and you are of the regretters. Then he left accompanied only by three people, and I do not know what happened to him after that, except that I know he perished.⁴⁵

Al-Qaaqaa Ibn Amr witnessed Talhah urging people to fight, even though he was bleeding from a wound. He told him: Abu Mohammad, you are wounded and you are too sick to continue your way. Enter these houses.⁴⁶

The Killer of Talhah

Historians reported that Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam is the

44. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 509.

Abdul Fatah Abdul-Maqsoud, *Al-Imam Ali Ibn Abu Talib*, part 3, p. 222.

45. Ibn Abu Al-Hadeed, *Commentary on Nahjul Balaghah*, part 2, p. 431.

46. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 513.

one who shot him with a deadly arrow. Yet, Talhah was his commander. Marwan and the rest of the Omayyads believed that Talhah and Al-Zubeir were two of the main agitators against Othman, but they were delaying their avenge of the two men until they obtain victory against the Imam. When Marwan witnessed that the battle was lost, he did not want Talhah to escape death because he was to the Omayyads the actual killer of Othman. Thus, the Omayyad strategy was to use the three leaders as a means to retrieve the authority which they lost by the death of Othman. They were ready to sacrifice the three leaders as easily as one would spend a dirham. But the three leaders did not know what they were doing. Had Al-Zubeir not been killed after his departure from Bassrah, he would not have escaped the avenge of the Omayyads.

Al-Zubeir Left the Battlefield

The Imam, as we mentioned above, reminded Al-Zubeir of the word of the Messenger when he told him that he will fight Ali while he is unjust to him. Upon that, Al-Zubeir promised not to fight the Imam.

His determination to fight was already weakened when he knew that Ammar Ibn Yasir is within the army of the Imam. In spite of this, he remained at the camp and participated in the battle for a short time. He did so because his son, Abdullah, accused him of being a coward filled with fear when he witnessed the flags of Ali carried by brave men. When Al-Zubeir informed his son that he took an oath not to fight Ali, his son counseled him to break his oath and make an atonement for that by liberating one of his servants. He did that and fought.⁴⁷

47. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 509.
Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra*, part 2, pp. 48-49.

Al-Zubeir Freed a Slave in Order to Fight the Imam's Camp

It is amazing that Al-Zubeir was too scrupulous to break his oath without an atonement, but he was not too scrupulous after the atonement to participate in a battle in which he may kill whomever he faces of the Muslims. Yet, he knew that killing a believer deliberately would bring eternity in Hell.⁴⁸

Finally, Al-Zubeir left the battlefield, and he did not leave until Ammar Ibn Yasir met him and started driving him out of the battlefield by his spear. Afraid to kill Ammar, or to be killed by him, Al-Zubeir asked him repeatedly: "Abu Al-Yaqthan (Ammar's code name), do you want to kill me?" Ammar repeatedly answered him: "No, Abu Abdullah (Al-Zubeir's code name), but you have to leave."⁴⁹ It was known to the companions that the Messenger said that the aggressor party shall kill Ammar.

Al-Zubeir was expected to fear a fight against the Imam more than a fight against Ammar. For fighting Ali, according to the testimony of the Messenger, is like fighting the Messenger himself. The Prophet said to Ali, Fatima, Al-Hassan, and Al-Hussein: "I am at peace with whomever you are at peace, and I am at war with whomever you are at war."⁵⁰

Al-Zubeir met his death after leaving Bassrah. Amr Ibn Jurmooz killed him while he was on his way to Medina.⁵¹

Under the Leadership of Ayesha

The camp of the three leaders was shaken up. Talhah died and Al-Zubeir left the battlefield; but Mother of the Believers took over after the two and proved that she was

48. The Holy Qur'an, chapter 4, verse 94.

49. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 124.

50. Ibn Majah, his authentic *Sunan*, part 1, p. 143.

51. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 510-511.

a braver leader and more capable of commanding the masses. She was more hostile than the two companions to the Imam. She had, through her relationship to the Messenger and to her father Abu Bakr, a halo of holiness in the eyes of the masses of the Muslims. She was placed in an armored canopy on the back of her camel (Askar). She called upon the people to come and fight, and they came back to her with great zeal. They probably felt that to let the wife of the Messenger down is to let the Messenger himself down. They decided to offer their sacrifices for her. They attacked the right and left wings of the Imam's army and forced the two wings to retreat. The two wings joined the heart of the army where the Imam was standing. At that moment, the Imam showed a bravery unparalleled in the history of wars.⁵²

The Unique Courage

The Imam personally moved towards the camel leading what was called the "Green Division" which consisted of the Migrant and Medinite companions. He was surrounded by his children Al-Hassan, Al-Hussein, and Mohammad. He gave the banner to Mohammad, and Mohammad told his soldiers to slow down until the rain of the arrows stopped. The Imam sent word to Mohammad urging him to advance and commanding him to start the decisive battle. When Mohammad hesitated, the Imam came from behind and put his left hand on the right shoulder of his son. He reprimanded him and commanded him to advance.⁵³

The Imam then, compassionately, took the banner from him and carried it in his left hand while his sword was drawn in his right hand. Then he charged the opposite camp, hitting them with his sword, then came back when

52. Abdul-Fattah Abdul-Maqsoud, *Al-Imam Ali Ibn Abu Talib*, part 3, pp. 214-216.

53. Ibn Abu Al-Hadeed, *Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah*, 1, p. 86.

his sword was twisted. He straightened it with his knee. His children and companions, including Ammar and Al-Ashtar, surrounded him and tried to prevent him from repeating his action, but he kept looking at the opposite camp. Then, he returned the banner to his son Mohammad, and charged again, entering into the midst of the hostile camp, hitting them with his sword. Witnessing people falling by his sword, men started to run away from him to the right and to the left. He returned after he moistened the soil with their blood, and his sword was twisted; so he again had to straighten it with his knee.⁵⁴

His companions surrounded him and asked him in the name of God not to continue, reminding him that it was their duty to protect him and do what he was doing. He said: By God, I do not want out of what you are witnessing (of his action) anything except to please God. Then he said to Mohammad: "Son of Al-Hanafeyah (his mother): This is the way you should fight."

Ta-if's Honey

A man brought him honey. When he tasted it, he said to the man who brought it: "Certainly your honey is from Al-Ta-if," (a city in Hijaz), and the man said: Yes, it is. But "Ameer Al-Mumineen," by God, I am amazed, how could you distinguish the honey of Al-Ta-if from others today when the hearts are jumping to the throats?" The Imam replied: "Son of my brother, by God, no fear touched the heart of your uncle, nor is he concerned with anything (but the truth)."⁵⁵

The Imam's Thrust Changed the Battle

The two charges of the Imam had their expected effect. They represented a thrust in the camp of the enemy and raised the morale of the Imam's army. He ordered Al-

54. Abdul Fattah Abdul-Maqsoud, *Al-Imam Ali Ibn Abu Talib*, part 3, p. 219.

55. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 127.

Ashtar to attack with his division the left wing of the Bassrite army, and he did and killed Hilal Ibn Wakee-a, who was the commander of the left wing. The fight was fierce and Al-Ashtar forced the left wing to retreat towards Ayeshah. They formed a circle around her, and most of them were from Banu Dhubbah, Banu Oday, Banu Asad, Banu Najiah, and Banu Bahilah. All these surrounded the camel and started to compete with each other by holding the rein of the camel one after another. The camel became the banner of the Bassrites, and Mother of the Believers was urging her sons to fight, and her hope of victory did not diminish.

Abdullah Ibn Khalaf Al-Khuza-i, chief of the people of Bassrah and their wealthiest, came and asked for a duel, saying that no one should meet him but Ali, and the Imam came to him and immediately hit him with his sword and split his head. Abdullah Ibn Abza held the rein of the camel, then attacked the army of the Imam, saying: "I hit them but I do not see Abu Hassan (Ali). This certainly is saddening." The Imam met him and struck him with his spear, and left the spear in him, saying: "You have seen Abu Hassan. How did you see him?"

About seventy warriors from Quraish were killed while they were holding the rein of the camel, and many non-Qureshites also died.⁵⁶ Abdul-Rahman Ibn Attab Ibn Oseid from Omayad was from the top of the Qureshites. Al-Ashtar attacked him and killed him. Al-Ashtar also attacked and killed Khabbar Ibn Amr Al-Rasibi when he heard him challenging the Imam.

Ammar, the Ninety-Year-Old

Ammar Ibn Yasir, who was ninety years old, fought like a lion. It is reported that he had a duel with Amr Ibn Yathri who was the bravest one among the Bassrites. Amr Ibn Yathri killed a number of companions of the Imam. Ammar challenged him saying: Certainly you have taken

56. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 126-127.

refuge in a safe place. Leave your place and come to me. People worried about Ammar because of his old age and because of the reputation of Amr as a warrior. But Ammar prevailed against him and dragged him by his feet to the camp of the Imam.⁵⁷

A man said to the Imam: "Ameer Al-Mumineen," what a great "Fitnah" (faith-testing trial)!! The Badrians (companions who attended the Battle of Badr with the Holy Prophet) are attacking each other with swords. The Imam replied: "Woe to you; Would this be a "Fitnah" when I am its leader? By the One Who sent Muhammad with the truth and honored his face, I never lied; nor was I devious from the right road, and no one ever was deviated from the right road through me. I am on a clear evidence from my Lord who made it clear to His Messenger and His Messenger made it clear to me. I shall be summoned on the Day of Judgment and I will be guiltless. And if I had sinned, what I am doing now would be an atonement for my sin."⁵⁸

Hamstringing the Camel

Beholding that death is around the camel and realizing that the war will not come to an end as long as that camel was standing, the Imam drew his sword and advanced towards the camel while the rein of the camel was in the hands of the Dhubbites. The killing continued and many of them fell down. The Imam reached the camel with a group from Nukhaa and Hamdan. He said to one of his companions (named Bujair): Hit the camel. Bujair hit the back of the camel with his sword. The camel fell down on his side and roared terribly. As soon as the animal fell, the army of Bassrah ran away as if they were locusts in a strong wind.

57. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 519.

58. Taha Hussein, *Al Fitnatul Kubra*, part 2, p. 53.

The Imam Spoke

Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr and Ammar Ibn Yasir carried the canopy of Ayeshah and put her aside. The Imam came towards her while he was angry but holding himself. He hit the canopy with his spear and said to her: Sister of Aram (likening her to a woman that ruled the country of Yemen before Islam). "You have brought people back to fight after they ran away and instigated them and made them kill each other . . ." She said: Ibn Abu Talib, you have won, be forebearant . . . Then she was taken to the mansion of Abdullah Ibn Khalaf Al-Khuza-i. She stayed days there, then the Imam sent her back to Medina in a very dignified way accompanied by women and men."

Ammar came to her when she was about to leave. He asked her: "Mother, where does this journey fit with what God had commanded you to do?" She said: "I testify that you were always telling the truth." He said: "Praise be to God, the One Who put for me these words on your tongue."⁶⁰

The Imam remained three days in his camp, then he entered Bassrah. He followed the "Sunnah" of the Prophet in his treatment of the people of Mecca. He forgave their guilty and prevented his followers from taking anything from the properties of the Bassrites. He divided what he found in the treasury of Bassrah among the winners and the vanquished equally. He prayed over the dead of the two parties. People of Bassrah re-elected him and re-pledged to him allegiance. He received that pledge from them while they were under their banners. He received it from the healthy and the wounded.

He addressed his vanquished opponents, saying: "You were the army of the woman and the followers of the animal. When it roared you responded, and when it was hamstrung you ran away . . . Whoever lives with you would be bound by his sin, and the one who leaves you

59. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, pp. 547-548.

60. The Imam Ali, *Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 1, p. 44-45.

receives the mercy of his Lord! By God, your city shall be drowned, and I visualize its mosque looking like a front of a ship or a sitting giraffe.”⁶¹ His prophecy was fulfilled years later when Bassrah was drowned and covered by water and nothing of its buildings remained visible except its mosque.⁶²

One of his companions told him after God gave him the victory: I wish my brother was present here to see how God gave you victory over your enemies. The Imam replied: “Is the sympathy of your brother with us?” He said: Yes. The Imam said: “Then he was present with us, and others were present who have not been conceived yet, whom time shall bring infrequently and through whom the faith will be strengthened.”⁶³

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE THREE LEADERS

As we look back at this war retrospectively, we find that thousands from the Bassrites met their death, believing that they were on the right side. They were confounded, and it was difficult for them to believe that a wife of the Messenger and two of his outstanding companions had parted with the truth. People were, and still are, trying to know the truth through their Leaders, rather than to try to know the Leaders through the truth. I do not believe that the people of Bassrah were aware of the brilliant history of the Imam Ali and the declarations of the Messenger concerning him.

The three leaders who led the Bassrites were fully aware of Ali’s history and the testimonies of the Prophet for him, but they concealed what they knew about him. They did not want the Bassrites to know it. They tried with

61. The Imam Ali, *Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 1, pp. 44-45.

62. Sheikh Mohammad Abdoh, his *Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 1, p. 45.

63. The Imam Ali, *Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 1, p. 45.

all their power to minimize his right and merit and accused him of what they themselves committed, the murder of Othman, knowing that Ali was innocent of their accusation. They added to what they had done to Othman the blood of thousands of victims who died in that battle from both sides.⁶⁴

The Omayyads Were Less Blamable than the Three Leaders

The responsibility of the three leaders in fighting the Imam and accusing him of the murder of Othman was bigger than the responsibilities of Muaweyah and the rest of the Omayyads.

The attempt of the Omayyads to avenge the blood of Othman by killing his killers did not have an Islamic justification, but it had a pre-Islamic tribal-justification. They were from the members of the clan of the assassinated Caliph. They did not play a big part in turning people against him. The three leaders of the Bassrite party did not have any justification in avenging the blood of Othman because they were the first to seek his blood. In addition to this, they were not from his relatives, and they knew that Ali was the most protective of Othman and opposed to his assassination. He offered Othman his help, and Othman rejected his offer⁶⁵; and in spite of this, he sent his two sons to do their share in his protection.

64. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 539 mentioned that ten thousand Muslims died at the battle of Bassrah.

Taha Hussein in his *Al-Fitnatul-Kubra*, part 2, p. 51 mentioned this estimate and other estimates came to twenty thousand.

65. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 82 reported that the Imam mediated between Othman and his opponents and both sides agreed that Othman removed his bad relatives from their offices and stopped giving them and others the public funds. Then Marwan dissuaded Othman from fulfilling his promise.

Talhah's Responsibility

Al-Balatheri reported that Talhah blamed Ali when he hit Al-Hassan and Al-Hussein for their unintended failure in protecting Othman, and that Ali cursed Talhah because he insisted to do what Ali disliked (conspiring against Othman). Talhah replied saying: Had Othman handed Marwan to the rebels, he would not have been killed." Ali disagreed with Talhah saying: "If Othman were to deliver Marwan to you, Marwan would have been killed before he was tried."⁶⁶

Al-Tabari reported in his History about the events of the year 36 after the Hijrah that Ali said to Al-Zubeir at Bassrah, "Do you want to avenge from me the blood of Othman, while you were his killer? May God make our harshest to Othman meet what he dislikes today."⁶⁷

Muaweyah, the head of the Omayyad party, was not from those who pledged allegiance to the Imam. On the contrary, he refused to give such a pledge. It is true that the election of the Imam by the people of Medina and the majority of the Muslim nation made it mandatory for Muaweyah to follow the Imam and obey him, but he technically is not a breacher of covenant with the Imam as Al-Zubeir and Talhah. The two companions Pledged their allegiance to the Imam, then led a devastating war against him. They were duty-bound to obey him as long as he followed the Book of God and the instructions of His Prophet. Ali was the most adherent to the Book of God and the teaching of the Holy Prophet. God ordered the believers to fulfill their covenant in which they give allegiance to a righteous ruler. The Holy Qur'an declared:

"And whoever breaches, he breaches against himself, and whoever fulfills what he pledges to God, God will give him a great reward."⁶⁸

66. Al-Balathori, *Ansab Al-Ashraf* part 4, p. 70.

67. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 509.

68. The Holy Qur'an, Chapter 48, verse 10.

The Messenger of God ordered the nation to kill the breachers of the pledge of allegiance. Muslim reported in his *Sahih* that the Holy Prophet said: "There shall be events and events. Whoever tries to divide this nation while it is united, hit his head with the sword, whoever he may be."⁶⁹ It is reported also that the Holy Prophet said:

"Whoever takes a rebellious stand (against a righteous Imam), and parts with the united community, then he dies, he would die a pre-Islamic death. And whoever fights blindly under a banner unknown to be a banner of truth, siding with a wrong party selfishly, then he is killed, he dies a pre-Islamic death. And whoever parts with my nation and carries a sword indiscriminately hitting its righteous and transgressor . . . and refusing to fulfill a covenant he made, he is not from me and I am not from him."⁷⁰

Much more was expected from Ayesah, Talhah, and Al-Zubeir than from Muaweyah who never had a brilliant past in religion; nor was he counted from among the righteous. The three leaders heard from the Messenger of God about Ali what Muaweyah did not hear. Even if the Omayyad Muaweyah had heard what the three leaders heard from the Messenger about Ali, it would have been expected from them, rather than Muaweyah, the opportunist, to listen to the words of the Messenger and obey him.

Ayesah, Al-Zubeir, and Talhah knew that the Messenger said on the day of Ghadeer Khum about Ali: "God, love whoever loves him and be hostile to whoever is hostile to him."⁷¹

And the Messenger also said to Ali, Fatima, Al-Hassan

69. Muslim, his *Sahih*, part 12, p. 241.

70. Muslim, his *Sahih*, part 12, p. 239.

71. Ibn Majah, his *Authentic Sunan*, part 1, hadith no. 145.

and Al-Hussein "I am at peace with whomever you are at peace, and I am at war with whomever you are at war."⁷²

These statements indicate clearly that whoever fights Ali fights the Messenger of God, and that the enemy of Ali is the enemy of God and His Messenger. Thus, the stand of the three righteous leaders with their hostilities towards Ali was an amazing event, for which there is no justification.

Al-Zubeir's Responsibility

Al-Zubeir should be particularly blamed. He is the one who stood up when Abu Bakr was elected, drawing his sword and saying "I shall not sheathe my sword until Ali is elected." Omar said to companions who were with him: Take his sword and hit the rock with it.⁷³ Had Ali wanted to fight for the caliphate on that day, Al-Zubeir was ready to fight and be killed for the sake of Ali's leadership. How did he, after 25 years, fight the Imam after the Imam was elected by the companions and he was one of the electors?

Al-Zubeir particularly was to be blamed also because he heard from the Messenger of God that he shall fight Ali unjustly. This was reported by Ibn Al-Atheer in his *Al-Kamil* and Al-Tabari in his *History* and a number of historians. Al-Hakim reported in his *Mustadrak* through four channels that Ali reminded Al-Zubeir on the day of the Battle of Bassrah that the Prophet said to Al-Zubeir that he shall fight Ali while he is unjust to him. And Al-Zubeir acknowledged that and said he had forgotten it.⁷⁴

Ayeshah's Responsibility

Ayeshah particularly was to be blamed much more than the others because she was one of the wives of the

72. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 2, p. 220.

73. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 120.

74. Ibn Abu Al-Hadeed, *Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 2, p. 78.

Prophet, and she knew the extent of the love of the Messenger for Ali. She received from the Messenger warning and reprimand when she displayed resentment towards the presence of Ali with the Messenger.

Dialogue of Om Selemah and Ayeshah

Ibn Abu Al-Hadeed in his commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah recorded that Abu Makhnaf reported a dialogue between Om Selemah (another wife of the Messenger) and Ayeshah when the latter decided to go to Bassrah and invited Om Selemah to accompany her. Om Selemah reminded her of things which Ayeshah did not deny:

She reminded her of what took place when both of them were with the Messenger of God and Ali sat privately with the Prophet and his session with him was long. Ayeshah wanted to enter and Om Selemah advised her not to do that and she did not listen to Om Selemah. Then she came back crying. Ayeshah at that time informed Om Selemah that she said to Ali Ibn Abu Talib: "I have only one out of every nine days with the Messenger; why don't you leave me alone with my day?" The Messenger turned to her angrily and his face was reddened, saying to her: "Go away! By God, whoever hates Ali from the members of my family or from other families, would be out of the Faith.""

The Lady of Al-Hau-ab

She reminded her also that they both were with the Messenger of God on a journey, and Ayeshah was washing the head of the Messenger and Om Selemah was preparing food for him. Suddenly he raised his head, saying: "I wish I knew which one of you will be the rider of the huge camel. The dogs of Al-Hau-ab will bark at her while she is deviating from the right road." Om Selemah said:

“I freed my hand from the food and said, ‘I seek refuge in God and His Messenger from this.’ Then he slapped your back and said: ‘Beware not to be that lady.’ Then he said to me: ‘Daughter of Abu Omayyah, be not that lady.’ Then he turned to Ayesshah saying: ‘Humaira, (red faced) I have already warned you.’ ”⁷⁶

The Patcher of the Sole

And the third item of which Om Selemah reminded Ayeshah was that they were with the Messenger on a journey. Ali used to mend the shoes of the Holy Prophet and wash his garments. The shoes of the Holy Prophet during that journey needed to be mended. He took them and started to patch them and sat in the shade of a tree. Abu Bakr and Omar asked permission to see the Prophet. Om Selemah said: Ayeshah and I left and sat behind the curtain. The two men entered and chatted with the Prophet for a while. Then they said: Messenger of God, we do not know how long you will be with us. We wish that you would inform us of a person whom you want as your successor. He said to the two men: “I see his place. And if I inform you of him, you shall part with him as the children of Israel parted with Aaron, son of Imran.” When the two men heard these words, they left without comment. When we came out to the Messenger, you said to him (and you were our most courageous to ask him): Whom would you choose as your successor to lead them? He said: “The patcher of the sole.” Then you and I went to see who was the patcher of the sole, and we found Ali patching the sole of the Prophet. You said to the Messenger of God: I do not see but Ali, and he said: “He is the one.”

Ayeshah acknowledged all of what Om Selemah reminded her of. Then Om Selemah told her: I am Om Selemah. Yesterday you were agitating against Othman and saying about him the worst words. You named him

(75), (76), (77) Ibn Abu Al-Hadeed, *Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 2, p. 78.

Naathal (a name of a heavily bearded Arab Jew). And you know the place of Ali Ibn Abu Talib from the Messenger of God.⁷⁷

A number of historians, including Ibn Al-Atheer and Al-Tabari reported the warning of the Messenger to Ayeshah and his prediction that she would be barked at by the dogs of Al-Hau-ab.⁷⁸

A number of the recorders of the hadith, including Al-Hakim also reported that. Al-Hakim reported in his Mustadrak the following:

When Ayeshah reached the area of Banu Amir, dogs barked at her. She asked: Which water is this? They said: Al-Hau-ab. She said: I think I am going back. Al-Zubeir said: No, you should continue your journey and let people see you, and you will bring about peace. She said: I guess that I am returning. I heard the Messenger of God saying: What would one of you do when the dogs of Al-Hau-ab bark at her?⁷⁹

Al-Hakim also reported that Om Selemah said: The Prophet one time mentioned the travels of some of the mothers of the believers and Ayeshah laughed, and he looked at her and said: Humaira, you should not be that lady. Then he turned to Ali saying: "If you have to deal with her, be kind to her."⁸⁰

Om Selemah portrayed to Ayeshah her deeds and she excelled in her presentation. She said: . . . "What would you say if the Messenger of God faces you while you are in these deserts riding the camel from one water to another water? Certainly God witnesses your travel, and you shall meet His Messenger (on the Day of Judgment)." If I were in your place and I am told: Enter Paradise, I would be

77. Ibn Abu Al-Hadeed, *Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 2, p. 78.

78. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, pp. 119-120.

79. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, pp. 119-120.

80. Ibn Abu Al-Hadeed, his *Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 2, p. 79.

ashamed to meet Mohammad after I tore up the screen with which he had hidden me. Make your house your fortress and the screen (of your room) your grave until you meet him, while you are in your best obedience to God and help to religion . . .”⁸¹

This sound advice was lost on Ayesah. She said: “I accept your preaching. The matter is not what you think. It is a good journey which is requested by two parties fighting each other. If I stay, I would not be sinning, and if I leave, it would be for something I have to escalate.”⁸²

It is amazing that Ayesah claimed that she was taking the journey because two parties fighting each other resorted to her. Yet, one of the two parties (the party of the Imam) not only did not request her to take it, but vehemently opposed it. On the other hand, the other party would not have stood up to the Imam without Ayesah’s help and instigation. This shows us that when a person determines to do something, he would not lack an excuse with which to justify his action.

Ayesah did all that while she knew that the Holy Qur’an commands the wives of the Messenger to stay in their houses:

“And stay in your houses and bedizen not yourselves with the bedizenment of the pre-Islamic State . . .” (Chapter 33, verse 34)

All this shows that the three leaders were more responsible than Muaweyah in destroying the unity of the Muslims by what they did under the pretext of avenging the blood of Othman while their aim was the destruction of the Imam’s caliphate.

81. Ibn Abu Al-Hadeed, his *Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 2, p. 79.

82. Ibn Abu Al-Hadeed, his *Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 2, p. 79.

CONCLUSION

In spite of all this, we are not allowed to say about the three leaders but good and ask God to forgive them and say: "Our Lord, forgive us and our brethren who preceded us in Faith." What they had done is for God to judge. But there are certain conclusions which we may draw from these events:

Should We Accept Their Hadiths?

1. Since these three distinguished leaders had legalized for themselves to shed so much blood in order to achieve their ends, it would not be logical to take what they had reported of statements and deeds of the Prophet to be authentic. When a person breaches a legitimate covenant, divides the Muslims into two camps, leads one of the two camps to start a bloody war, he would not be righteous and reliable reporter. When a Muslim has the courage to shed the blood of thousands of innocent Muslims in order to serve his own interest, he would not lack the courage to tell the untruth.

Criticism is Much Smaller Sin Than Fighting

2. If the Muslims are not allowed to say but good about Ayesah, Talhah, and Al-Zubeir, in spite of their war against "Ameer Al-Mumineen" (the Leader of the believers) and the Brother of the Messenger, it would not be permissible to say but good about the Muslims who take a critical or an unfriendly attitude towards some outstanding companions. For fighting an outstanding companion is much more abhorable to God than an unfriendly attitude towards him.

The Islamic law does not discriminate among Muslims. What would be applicable to the three leaders should be applicable to the rest of the Muslims.

The criticism of any companion was never forbidden to people. The Muslims who criticize some of the caliphs

do not do that because they deliberately want to defame them. They do that because they have a negative opinion of them. They sincerely believe in what they say.

The three leaders, on the other hand, had fought the Imam while they knew that they were wrong. If we have to respect these leaders and say only good about them, it would not be right for us to be hostile to the millions of Muslims for what is much less than killing and fighting.

Critics of the companions are not necessarily devious or transgressors. It is neither logical nor fair for the Muslims to condemn each other because of their opinions pertaining to the events and personalities of the Islamic history, as long as those opinions do not contradict the Holy Qur'an or the well known instructions of the Holy Prophet. Nor is there anything in the known instructions of the Holy Prophet that prevents the Muslims from criticizing companions whose deeds or words disagree with the Qur'an or the Prophet in word or deed.

***The Three Leaders
Open the Door
of Wars Among Muslims***

3. The three leaders are the ones who opened on the Muslim society the doors of the civil wars. They started the first bloody battle in which thousands from both sides fell, and through which the unity of the Muslims was destroyed and never restored. It is difficult for our minds to understand how these righteous leaders have the courage to shed so much blood, while the Holy Qur'an declares that killing one believer would bring an eternal Divine punishment to the killer:

“And whosoever slays a believer deliberately, his reward is Hell forever. God’s wrath is against him. He has cursed him and prepared for him an awful doom.”
(Chapter 4, verse 93)

4. The Battle of Siffeen with all its violence and ugliness was only a consequence of the Battle of Bassrah. Had

Mother of Believers Ayeshah, Talhah and Al-Zubeir assisted the Imam and gone throughout the Islamic provinces urging people to obey the Imam and to walk under his banner, Muaweyah would not have dared to fight him. Had these leaders done that, Muaweyah would have realized that if he fights the Imam, he would be waging a losing battle that will end with his destruction and the destruction of his camp, and he would have humbly surrendered to the Imam. But when he witnessed a portion of the people of Iraq sharing with him his opinion and taking an attitude similar to his, and that leaders from the outstanding companions preceded him in combating the Imam, his hope of a victory against the Imam was heightened.

The Battle of Bassrah was in fact a main factor in Muaweyah's continued defiance of the Imam and his victory at the end. It is true that the Imam obtained a clear victory against his opponents at the Battle of Bassrah, but the losses which both camps suffered had weakened the Imam's camp a great deal. The tribes of the defeated camp remained unfriendly to the Imam, carrying grudges against him because of the thousands of men whom they lost in that battle. The tribes of the Imam's camp also were weakened and lost a great deal of determination to wage a decisive campaign against Muaweyah because of their losses in the battle of Bassrah. Muaweyah remained outside the battle waiting and increasing in material and manpower.

Probably the Qureshites had forgotten, through the passage of time, what they had suffered of losses at the hand of the Imam in the battles of Badr, Ohod, and Moat. However, the Battle of Bassrah in which the Qureshites lost seventy of their chiefs had not only revived but also increased their rancor and hatred.

It is an understatement to say that the action of the three rebellious leaders had led to the transformation of the Righteous Caliphate into the despotic rule of the Omayyad dynasty.

Had these three leaders not waged that sinister war, the

Imam could have uprooted the Omayad plantation from the Syrian land and the Righteous Caliphate could have continued for generations. Having internal peace, the Imam could have faced the external adversaries of the Muslim World with his unusual bravery.

The three leaders waged their campaign against Othman because they feared that the caliphate would be transferred from him to one of his relatives and that would mean the caliphate will rest with the Omayads. By this, a rule of dynasty would be established and Talhah and Al-Zubeir would be deprived of the caliphate. To prevent this, they managed to kill Othman. But the death of Othman did not make them closer to their goal. So they waged their bloody campaign to destroy the Imam's caliphate. This also brought them no closer to their goal. They destroyed themselves and the caliphate of the Imam and transformed the caliphate to a rule of Omayad dynasty, the least religious tribe, rather than the close relatives of Mohammad whom God purified of all sins.



The Alleged Conspiracy

Al-Tabari recorded through a channel including Saif Ibn Omar that Mohammad (Ibn Oun) and Talhah (two reporters) reported that Ali sent Al-Qaaqaa Ibn Amr (a Kufite leader) to Ayeshah, Talhah, and Al-Zubeir after they occupied Bassrah. Al-Qaaqaa spoke to them and convinced them to make peace with the Imam, and that the two parties should try to seek the killers of Othman and punish them after the situation calms down and peace prevails.

The report says that the Imam agreed to the proposal, and that he left Thee Qar area after he delivered a sermon in which he mentioned the grace of God that was bestowed on the nation by unity after the Messenger of God, through the First Caliph, then the one who followed him, then the one who followed the Second Caliph.¹

The Imam, according to the report, said also: "Then this event (the assassination of Othman) took place. It was brought on this nation by groups who sought the material of this world, envying those who obtained it by their own merit, and they wanted to turn the affairs regressively. God will fulfill His will and He will punish whom He wants to punish. I would like to inform you that I shall be leaving tomorrow, and none from those who assisted in anyway against Othman should accompany us. Let the fools stay away from me . . ."²

1. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 493.

2. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 493.

The report continues to say that individuals from those who participated in the siege of Othman, including Al-Ashtar, Alba Ibn Haitham, Oday Ibn Hatam, Salim Ibn Thaalabah Al-Absi, and Shuraih Ibn Dubai-ah held a secret meeting and Abdullah Ibn Saba (titled Ibn Al-Souda) was with them. (This man is said to have been a Yemenite from Sana-a, born from a Jewish father and an Abyssinian mother, adopted Islam during the days of Othman and instigated people against him.) The conferees realized that they will pay the price of peace with their lives, and that Ali shall be harsher with them than Talhah, Al-Zubeir, and Ayeshah, because he knows more about the Book of God than the three leaders, and he was much more adherent to the Divine law, especially the laws which deal with criminals.³

The report continues reminding us (as Dr. Taha Hussein said) of the conference of the Qureshite pagans when they conspired against the Messenger of God, and Satan attended their conference disguised as an old man from Najd. There was only one difference: The Devil in this report was Abdullah Ibn Saba. The conferees made several proposals but finally "Ibn Al-Souda" (Abdullah Ibn Saba) advised them to make the two camps lose the opportunity of agreement by starting a fight at night. By this, each of the two camps would accuse the other of starting the fight. The report says that the conferees implemented their strategy with precision and succeeded in inflaming the Battle of Bassrah.⁴

Many historians after Al-Tabari gave this report great importance and chose it over other reports in spite of the fact that Al-Tabari himself mentioned a number of reports which contradict this report.

Contradicted by Better Reports

He reported that Ammar Al-Duhani reported that Ali

3. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, pp. 493-494.

4. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, pp. 493-494.

took a copy of the Holy Qur'an on the day of the Battle of Bassrah and went through his camp saying: Who shall hold this Qur'an and invite the Bassrite camp to agree that both camps should comply with the contents of the Qur'an? Then he said: The one who makes this invitation should know that he will be killed by the Bassrites. A young Kufite man said to him: "I shall do it," and the Imam ignored him. Then he repeated his call and the same man repeated the same answer. The Imam gave him the Qur'an and the Kufite youth extended the invitation, and the Bassrites shot him to death with a hail of arrows. The Imam said: "Now it has become legitimate to fight them."⁵

Al-Tabari reported also that Al-Zuhri said that when Ali received the news of the death of the seventy men from Abdul-Qais, (a branch from the tribe of Rabee-ah), he set out hurriedly until he came to Bassrah saying: "I am saddened by the tragedy of Rabee-ah, the listener, the obedient, who was attacked before my arrival." When the two camps faced each other, Al-Zubeir came on his horse and Ali called upon Al-Zubeir. They faced each other and Ali asked Al-Zubeir: What brought you here? Al-Zubeir said: "You. And I do not believe that you are qualified for the caliphate; nor do I believe that you have more right to it than we, and you killed Othman." Ali said to Al-Zubeir: Do you ask me for the blood of Othman while you were his killer? May God make our harshest to Othman meet today what he dislikes. He reminded Al-Zubeir of the word of the Messenger of God: That he will fight Ali while he is unfair to him. Al-Zubeir left the scene and promised the Imam that he will not fight him.⁶

Al-Tabari reported that the Imam said to Talhah: You have brought the wife of the Messenger of God trying to fight with her while you have hidden your wife at your house (in Medina). Did you not pledge your allegiance to

5. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, Events of 36 H., p. 509.

6. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, Events of 36 H.

me? Talhah said: I pledged my allegiance to you while the sword was over my neck. Ali said to his camp: Who shall display this Holy Qur'an and invite the opposite camp to agree with us to abide by its contents, and the one who does that should know that he will be killed? A Kufite youth said, I. The Imam said to him: Offer them this (the Qur'an) and say to them it is between you and us from its beginning to its end, and fear God by refraining from shedding our blood and your blood.

The Kufite youth did what the Imam told him to do, and he was killed. Ali at that time said: Now the fight is legitimate.

They started fighting, and seventy men died, and each one of them was holding the rein of the camel.⁷

This report, like the report that preceded it, is evidence that the fight did not begin until the Imam offered the other camp peace and surrender of the matter to the Book of God. This was after the Imam and his two opponents Talhah and Al-Zubeir faced each other and after he debated with them. All this was in front of people and the two camps were witnessing it. This was, of course, in the daytime. Thus, there was no secret conspiracy and no battle that the conspirators started during the night.

Al-Tabari reported also that Al-Shi-abi reported that the battle of Bassrah started during the height of the day till the afternoon.⁸ Ammar Al-Duhani and Al-Zuhri and Al-Shi-abi narrated witnessable events and consistent with the logic of the events. Yet these reports were not chosen by the historians who came after Al-Tabari because these reports seem to convict the three leaders and place the responsibility of the Battle of Bassrah upon their shoulders. The historians chose Saif's report of the conspiracy, though it reports something that was not witnessable and at the same time was not consistent with the logic of the events.

7. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, Events of 36 H., p. 509

8. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 512.

The three leaders did not come to Bassrah for a picnic or for spreading peace. They came to start a war against the Imam, and they started the battle before his arrival to Bassrah. They killed scores of people and occupied the city before the arrival of the Imam to the city.⁹

Saif reported a conspiracy that was made in a secret conference attended by Abdullah Ibn Saba, and that conspiracy resulted by starting the battle at night according to the plan of the conspirators. The historians chose this report and gave it high importance, though Mohammad (Ibn Oun) and Talhah (whom Saif claimed to be the source of his report) did not claim that they witnessed the conference. These historians did not even ask how Mohammad and Talhah knew about this conspiracy.

History mentions that the Meccan pagans had a secret conference at the "Nadwa" (club in Mecca) in which they conspired to kill the Messenger. The Prophet knew about it through a Divine Revelation. Saif Ibn Omar and Mohammad and Talhah, on the other hand, did not receive a Revelation from God.

It is evident that these historians chose this report because they wished that the contents of this report were real. The reason is that that report vindicates the three leaders.

Since this report was given so much importance, it is necessary to try to investigate it and see whether it is worth all that credence which it was given by the historians. Therefore, I would like to record the following observations:

(1) This report presupposes that Ayeshah, Mother of Believers, Talhah and Al-Zubeir, were serious in seeking the avenge for the blood of Othman. Yet, the instigation made by the three leaders against Othman and their admission of making it, is a well known fact in history. The three leaders urged the Muslims to kill Othman and when he died and Ali was elected, they used his blood only as a

9. Dr. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnat Al-Kubrah*, part 2, pp. 36-37.

means of combating the Imam. Since this was their intention, they would not be ready to change their attitude if he agrees with them to punish the killers of Othman because their target was Ali rather than the killers of Othman.

(2) Saif's report mentioned that the Imam said before his departure from Thee Qar: "I will be leaving tomorrow, and you should leave with me. None of the people who assisted in the crisis of Othman should accompany me, and let the fools stay away from me." If the Imam had uttered these words, it would be evident that he did not mean by assistance in the crisis of Othman a direct participation in his assassination, because none of the direct participants in Othman's murder were in the Imam's army.

The ones whom he meant by these alleged words are those who agitated against Othman and started the march against him and particularly those who urged people to kill him or participated in his siege. Some of these people were in the Imam's army. If the Imam had issued this order, he should have prevented those instigators and participants in his siege from accompanying him (the Imam) to Bassrah, but this was not the case.

Mohammad Ibn Abu Bakr

The Imam did not prevent Mohammad Ibn Abu Bakr from accompanying him, though he knew that Mohammad was one of the leaders of the agitators against Othman and of the participants in his siege. He was also one of those who climbed the wall and entered his mansion to kill him, though he did not participate in his killing. Historians agree that he held the beard of Othman and insulted him and called him "Naathal" and that he said to him: "What did Muaweyah and Ibn Abu Sarh and others from your relatives avail you?"¹⁰ The Imam knew all that, yet he kept Ibn Abu Bakr in his company. Mohammad attended the Battle of Bassrah with the Imam. He is the one

10. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, pp. 89-90

who removed the canopy of his sister Ayesah from the back of her camel when the camel fell down.^{10a} Mohammad Ibn Abu Bakr was so close to the Imam that the Imam used to consider him as one of his children. Mohammad Ibn Abu Bakr was killed while he was the Imam's appointed governor of Egypt.

Al-Ashtar

It was clear to the Imam that Malik Al-Ashtar was an outstanding agitator against Othman. He participated in his siege, but he was not a participant in his murder. Othman exiled him from Iraq to Syria twice. Al-Ashtar led after that a group of Kufites to prevent Sa-eed Ibn Al-aus (Othman's appointed governor) from coming back to Kufa.

Al-Ashtar was the first revolutionary leader who called for Ali's election after the death of Othman. He remained with the Imam and accompanied him to Thee Qar, then he went to Kufa and came back with the Kufan army to meet the Imam in Thee Qar. Then he departed with the Imam to Bassrah, and he was the top general in the Imam's army. It is from the well known facts of history that Al-Ashtar was extremely close to the Imam for the duration of his reign until Al-Ashtar died. He was the Imam's right hand in both battles of Bassrah and Siffeen. Al-Ashtar died by poison plotted by Muaweyah while Al-Ashtar was on his way to Egypt. It was the Imam who sent him as his appointed governor of Egypt.¹¹

Oday Ibn Hatam

Oday Ibn Hatam, who was mentioned in Saif's report as a conspirator and a part of the conference which was at-

10a. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 533, and he mentioned that Ammar Ibn Yasir aided Mohammad Ibn Abu Bakr in the removal of the canopy.

11. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 178.

tended by Ibn Saba, was also close to the Imam and an outstanding supporter. He attended the battles which the Imam faced during his caliphate. Oday accompanied the Imam from Thee Qar to Bassrah, and the Imam did not prevent him from going with him even after the alleged order that the participants against Othman cannot accompany him.¹²

Ammar Ibn Yasir

We ought to mention particularly Ammar Ibn Yasir who was an outstanding companion. He was from the leaders of the opposition to Othman. He called for his removal. His voice was the loudest in criticizing his policy. He shared with Ayeshah, Talhah, and Al-Zubeir their opinion which called for Othman's assassination. In spite of all that, Ammar was one of the outstanding leaders in the Imam's army. Those who attended the Battles of Bassrah and Siffeen used to follow Ammar as if he were an Islamic banner.¹³ It is well known in history that the presence of Ammar at the Battle of Bassrah on the side of the Imam was one of the main factors which contributed to the departure of Al-Zubeir from the battlefield.^{13a} Al-Zubeir knew that the Messenger of God said to Ammar: "Ammar, the aggressor party shall kill you."¹⁴ Had the Imam ordered those who assisted with anything against Othman not to accompany him to Bassrah, he would have prevented Ammar from going with him.

Thus, as the report of Saif is opposed to the reports of Ammar Al-Duhani, Al-Zuhri and Al-Shi-abi, it is also opposed to the well known facts of history that the Imam was accompanied to Bassrah by Ammar Ibn Yasir, Mo-

12. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 4, p. 119.

Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 525 mentioned that Oday Ibn Hatam and Al-Ashtar were the ones who reached the camel of Ayeshah in order to end the Battle of Bassrah.

13. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 157.

13a Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 107.

14. Al-Termathi, his authentic *Sunan*, part 5, pp. 323-333.

hammad Ibn Abu Bakr, Malik Al-Ashtar, and Oday Ibn Hatem. These distinguished individuals were with him, and they were extremely close to him. When a report is opposed to well known facts in history, it should be disregarded.

(3) In addition to the aforementioned, the Imam was not in need of anyone to ask him to punish anyone who killed a believer unjustly. Had the Imam known the killer (or killers) of Othman, he would have punished him immediately without waiting for any agreement with Talhah, Al-Zubier and Ayesah, as a price for his peace with the three leaders.

It is well known in history that the Imam was most observant of criminal punishment. He was the one who counseled Othman to kill Obeidullah Ibn Omar when he killed Al-Hirmizan without any evidence that substantiates his involvement in the murder of his father Omar.¹⁵ The Imam threatened Obeidullah with punishment because of this, while still out of power.

His strong adherence to the Islamic principles forced him to enter into the war of Siffeen, the bloodiest in the history of Islam until that time. It was possible for him to avoid himself that costly war by keeping Muaweyah as governor of Syria. But he said: "I would not compromise in my religion." He chose that, rather than to deviate from his principles in the least.

Such a leader does not need an agreement with Talhah and Al-Zubeir in order to enforce the Islamic law by punishing killers of a prominent Muslim. Had he viewed that Mohammad Ibn Abu Bakr, Al-Ashtar and those who instigated people against Othman deserved punishment, he would have done that without delay. The caliphate in his view was only a means for executing justice and enforcing the Islamic laws. The least of what the Imam would have done to them is to keep them away from him and not make them a part of his army. Since he did not do that and did the opposite by making them his closest

15. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 239.

associates, we infer that they did not deserve any punishment for their attitude towards the Third Caliph and their agitation against him.

The Three Leaders

If he had believed that they were criminals deserving punishment, it would not be conceivable that he would agree with Talhah and Al-Zubeir to punish them and leave Talhah, Al-Zubeir, and "Om Al-Mumineen" (Mother of Believers) unpunished while they were the outstanding agitators against Othman. They were the first to do that, and they continued their way until Othman died. The Imam would not give different treatments to people of equal crimes.

It seems that the Imam used to believe that only the ones who participated directly in the assassination of Othman were punishable. We have already mentioned that three of those who participated in his murder were killed at the same hour he was killed. The three were Qutairah, Soudan Ibn Hamran, and Kinanah Ibn Basheer Al-Tajeebi. If there were other participants, the Imam did not know. He said in a letter to Muaweyah:

"I do not know specifically any killer of Othman. I thought deeply about this matter, and I did not see it permitted for me to hand you anyone you accuse from among those who are around me."¹⁶

(4) The sermon of the Imam, which Saif's report mentioned, speaks clearly that the Imam believes in the soundness of Othman's policy and his administration of public funds and that he approved Othman's appointment of his relatives. The report mentioned that the Imam said in his sermon: "God has bestowed His grace on the nation by the unity through the three Caliphs one after another. Then this event (assassination of Othman) took place. It was brought on this nation by people who sought the material of this world. They were envious of those who were

16. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra*, part 2, p. 68.

given it by God meritoriously for their virtues. These material seekers were trying to turn the affairs of the nation regressively.”

Thus, the Imam, according to this report, was speaking of the soundness of the policy of Othman and accusing those who opposed him of trying to turn the national affairs regressively. They did what they did just for the sake of the worldly material and out of jealousy of Othman and his appointed officials to whom God had given the materials of the World meritoriously and for their virtues.

There is no doubt that this is in conflict with what was known in history with utmost certainty that the Imam did not approve Othman’s policy in handling the public funds; nor did the Imam approve Othman’s appointments of his relatives. The Imam mediated many times between Othman and his opponents, asking him to dismiss his relatives and change his policy, and many times Othman promised to change and reform in response to his mediation, then Marwan would prevent Othman from fulfilling his promise.¹⁷

Had the Imam believed in the soundness of Othman’s policy and the policy of his appointed governors, the Imam would not have insisted on the dismissal of Muaweyah and waged for his dismissal the Battle of Siffeen which had no equal in the history of Islam before that time.

All these aspects substantiate clearly that the report of Saif Ibn Omar was a fabrication made up for covering the reality and acquitting the three leaders of the responsibility of the Battle of Bassrah. It aimed also at ruining the reputation of the supporters of the Imam such as Al-Ashtar and others by accusing them of starting the war for their selfish purposes and upon the counsel of a hypocrite who was alien to the Islamic nation. Any serious student of the Islamic history knows that Al-Ashtar and the rest of the revolutionary leaders were among the most noble

17. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, pp. 81-82.

Muslims in their intention and adherence to the ideals of Islam and who gave their souls for the pleasure of God.

DID ABDULLAH IBN SABA EXIST?

However, there are reasons to doubt the very existence of Abdullah Ibn Saba. I do not think that this man was but a fairy-tale and was admitted into the history of Islam for covering undesirable informations. The defenders of Othman and his policy wanted to attribute the revolution which was made against him to a Jew who is alien to Islam.

They alleged that he organized, through secret conspiracies, elaborate cells in Bassrah, Kufah, Egypt, and Damascus for a revolution against the Caliph.¹⁸ They said that this alleged man claimed that the Prophet Mohammad will come back, and that he tried to substantiate the return of the Holy Prophet to this world by comparing it to the return of Jesus to this world in the future. Since Mohammad is more important than Jesus, he would be more entitled than Jesus to return. They said that Ibn Saba supported the idea of the return of the Prophet by the following verse:

“Certainly the One Who commanded you to convey the Qur’an (to mankind) shall return you to a new coming . . .” (Chapter 28, verse 85¹⁹)

Who Was the First to Speak of the Prophet’s Return?

I would like to state clearly that attributing the idea of the Prophet’s return to the imaginary Ibn Saba is an obvious distortion of the truth. *Was not Omar the first one who proclaimed the doctrine of the Prophet’s return?*

18. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4 (Events of the 36th year H.), pp. 340-341.

19. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4 (Events of the 36th year H.), pp. 340-341.

History testifies, and no historian or hadith-reporter would deny, that Omar stood at the Mosque of the Prophet when the Prophet died and said:

“Some hypocrites allege that the Messenger of God died. The Messenger did not die. He only went to his Lord as Moses, son of Imran, went to his Lord. He left his people for forty nights, then he returned to them after it was said that he died. By God, the Messenger of God will return as Moses returned. He will sever the hands and legs of the men who alleged that he died.” (*The Brother of the Prophet Mohammad*, vol. 1, p. 161 (and Ibn Husham, in his *Biography of the Prophet*, part 2, p. 655).

Would any Muslim accuse Omar of learning this doctrine from Abdullah Ibn Saba?

If anyone after Omar believed in the return of the Prophet, we should assume that he learned that from Omar, rather than from Ibn Saba.

They also mentioned that this imaginary Jew was the one who spread the doctrine of Ali's executorship and successorship to the Messenger.²⁰ They said also that he taught Abu Tharr while in Damascus the theory that prohibits treasuring gold and silver, and that what is collected from Zakat and other Islamic taxes are Muslims' fund rather than God's fund.²¹ They also said that Ammar Ibn Yasir went to Egypt and met Ibn Saba, and that Ibn Saba turned him against Othman.²²

These allegations contradict well known historical facts and very substantiated truths. From these facts is that Othman did not follow the policy of the Two Caliphs before him, though he pledged to Abdul-Rahman Ibn Ouf and the nation at the time of his selection that he will follow their policy.

It is well known in history that the Messenger exiled Al-Hakam Ibn Abu Al-Auss and his family and said: Al-

20. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 340.

21. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 283.

22. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 341.

Hakam shall not live with me in Medina, forever. Othman brought back the exiled of the Prophet and his children. He gave them large amounts from the public funds.²³ He gave them hundreds of thousands of dirhams. He made Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam his main advisor and actually, he was the real caliph.

It is a well known fact of history that Abdullah Ibn Abu Sarh deserted the Faith after he declared his Islam, and that the Messenger of God ordered his execution.²⁴

It is also known in history that Waleed Ibn Aqabah Ibn Abu Mo-eet was a transgressor and used to drink intoxicants.²⁵ The Holy Qur'an testifies to his transgression.²⁶ Yet, Othman appointed Ibn Abu Sarh as governor of Egypt. He gave him the fifth of the spoils of North Africa.²⁷ Othman also appointed Waleed governor of Kufa. He did not dismiss him until the Muslims testified that he was found drunk while he was leading the congregational prayer at the main Mosque of Kufa.²⁸

It is also known that Othman exiled Abu Tharr²⁹ and beat up Ammar Ibn Yasir until Ammar fainted.³⁰ He also ordered Abdullah Ibn Mas-ood to be thrown out of the Mosque and his ribs were broken.³¹ He penalized these three outstanding companions only because they were critical of his policy.

Othman also exiled a number of good people from Kufa to Syria because they criticized his policy and that of his appointed officials from the Omayyads.³² There are no prescribed punishments in Islam for critics who demand

23. Al-Balathori, *Ansab Al-Ashraf*, part 4, p. 28.

24. Ibn Husham, *Biography of the Prophet*, part 2, p. 409.

25. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, pp. 53-69.

26. Ibn Husham, *Biography of the Prophet*, part 2, p. 296.

27. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 46.

28. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 53.

29. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 56, and Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4.

30. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra*, part 1, p. 161.

31. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnatul-Kubra*, part 1, p. 161.

32. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, pp. 70-71.

reform from a ruler. The masses of the people resented punishment of these people by exile. Exile, according to the Holy Qur'an, is a punishment for those who are at war with God and His Messenger and those who spread corruption in the land. These exiled Muslims were neither at war with God and His Messenger, nor were they from the corruptors of the land. They were only critics of the Caliph because he used to give any member of his clan tens or hundreds of thousands of dirhams from the public funds and grant them vast pieces of land from the public property.³³

It was only expected that the companions and the rest of the Muslims would frown at these arbitrary actions after they witnessed the way of the Messenger and the two Caliphs after him. It was only a matter of course that resentment would grow, and that people would demand from the Caliph to change his policy and dismiss his appointed officials who were his relatives. It was also expected that the resentment would be transformed into a revolution after he refused to change.

The companions and other outstanding Muslims were not in need of an alleged Jew to call for a revolution. The existence of such a Jew in relation to the causes of the revolution was of no effect and similar to the existence of a fifth leg of a chair. To say that Othman adopted the policy that was approved by the companions and the rest of the Muslims and that Abdullah Ibn Saba is the one who instigated people against him is an invitation to the denial of well established facts of history.

The attribution of the revolution against Othman to Abdullah Ibn Saba cannot be true unless we say that Abdullah Ibn Saba is the one who counselled the Caliph to commit the numerous violations which he committed and which brought about the revolution. Thus, we ought to ask the following questions: Did Ibn Saba advise the Caliph? Did he persuade the Caliph to give his relatives

33. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 49.

the public funds and make Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam his prime minister? Did he convince him to exile companions such as Abu Tharr and other prominent Muslims such as Malik Al-Ashtar? Did Ibn Saba counsel him to beat up outstanding companions?

These and other illegal actions are the true causes of the revolution. Unless Ibn Saba is the one who convinced Othman to commit all these mistakes and refuse to change them, he could not be a cause of revolution. Of course, the historians who adopted the report of Saif Ibn Omar (which created the tale of Ibn Saba) would not accept any relationship between Othman and Ibn Saba.

Was Ibn Saba in Medina?

The people who accepted the report of Saif Ibn Omar have forgotten that the agitation against Othman did not start in Bassrah or Kufa or Egypt. It rather started in Medina and that Ayeshah and Talhah, and Al-Zubeir were the most outstanding agitators against Othman. Was Ibn Saba the motivator of these people to oppose Othman and to call for his murder?

The report of the conspiracy of Ibn Saba says that Ibn Saba met Abu Tharr in Damascus and urged him to oppose Othman and Muaweyah. But Abu Tharr started his critical campaign while in Medina before he went to Damascus. He was exiled to Damascus because of his critical campaign against the Caliph.³⁴

Saif's report says also that Ibn Saba is the one who taught Abu Tharr to say that the revenues of Zakat and other Islamic taxations are the revenues of the Muslims, rather than the revenues of God. Yet, history tells us that when Abu Tharr was brought back to Medina from Damascus, he was still saying that these revenues are revenues of God.

34. Ibn Abu Al-Hadeed, *Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah*, vol. 1, p. 240.

It is reported that when Abu Tharr came to Medina, he faced the Caliph and he reported in the presence of other companions that he heard the Messenger of God saying: "When the men from the children of Abu Al-Auss become thirty, they will make *the revenue of God* rotate among them, the servants of God their slaves, and the religion of God interpolated."³⁵

However, saying that Abu Tharr learned some religious doctrines from an alien hypocrite seems to be extremely ugly and obviously fabricated. Abu Tharr was an outstanding companion of the Prophet. He embraced Islam before all the Medinite and most of the Meccan companions.³⁶ He accompanied the Holy Prophet, and his companionship was long. He memorized the Holy Qur'an, and he heard from the Messenger and understood what he heard. He reported the statements of the Messenger and his deeds accurately. He was well aware of what he was reporting. He was extremely true and devoted, and the Holy Prophet loved him very much.

Al-Termathi reported that the Messenger said: "Neither did the Heaven shade nor did the earth carry truer than Abu Tharr."³⁷ He reported also that the Holy Prophet said: "Neither did the Heaven shade nor did the earth carry truer and more loyal than Abu Tharr. He walks on earth with the immaterialistic attitude of Jesus, son of Mary"³⁸

It is reported by Ibn Majah that the Messenger said: "God commanded me to love four persons, and He informed me that He loves them. When he was asked: Who are they? The Prophet said; Ali is from them (repeating that three times) and Abu Tharr, Salman, and Al-Miqdad."³⁹

35. Ibn Abu Al-Hadeed, *Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah*, vol. 1, p. 241.

36. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnatul-Kubra*, part 1, p. 133.

37. Al-Termathi, his authentic *Sunan*, part 4, p. 334 (hadith no. 3889)

38. Al-Termathi, his authentic *Sunan*, part 5, p. 334 (hadith no. 3890)

39. Ibn Majah, his authentic *Sunan*, part 1, p. 53 (hadith no. 129)

Abu Tharr was so concerned with the purity of the Islamic teaching to a degree that he did not allow Kaab Al-Ahbar to give a verdict in Islamic law, though Kaab Al-Ahbar was highly respected by Omar Ibn Al-Khattab and Othman. Many times, the two Caliphs asked him about things in religion, and they used to listen to what he said.

It is reported that Abu Tharr said to Othman after he came back from Damascus to Medina: "It is not sufficient for a man to pay only Zakat. He should add to that by helping the needy and feeding the hungry and spending in the way of God." When Kaab Al-Ahbar commented that "Whoever fulfills his prescribed duty, does not have to add anything to it," Abu Tharr became angry and said to Kaab: Son of the Jewish lady, who are you to say this? Do you want to teach us our religion? Then he hit him with his rod on his neck.⁴⁰

A man that does not allow Kaab (who was highly regarded by Omar) to give a verdict in religion is not expected to follow the opinion of a Jew who adopted Islam during the time of Othman and did not see the companions of the Messenger, nor did he know the Islamic instructions.

If Abu Tharr and Ammar agreed with Ibn Saba, Ibn Saba must be right. The Holy Prophet testified for the truth of these two companions.

It is reported that Ayeshah said that the messenger of God said: "Whenever Ammar is given the choice between two alternatives, he always chooses the most righteous of the two alternatives."⁴¹ Abdullah Ibn Mas-ood was consulted: Whom should we follow when the Muslims are divided? He said: "Follow Ammar. He will never part with the truth . . ."⁴² The Prophet told Ammar: "Ammar, be cheerful, the aggressor party will kill you."⁴³ He

40. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 284.

41. Al-Termathi, his authentic *Sunan*, part 5, pp. 332-333.

42. Yousof Ibn Abdul-Barr, *Al-Istea-Ab*, part 3, p. 1139.

43. Al-Termathi, his authentic *Sunan*, part 5, p. 332-333.

also said: "Paradise longs for three persons: Ali, Ammar, and Salman."⁴⁴

When the Messenger of God testified for the distinction of a companion of this kind, such companion must have been right. And if these two companions had agreed with any person about a religious matter, the one with whom they had agreed must have been right. If the two companions agreed with a person who was a new convert, he, and not they, must be the learner. He would be learning from the two companions.

If Ibn Saba were in existence and if he had met Abu Tharr and Ammar (as Saif's report alleged), it would be logical to assume that he did not teach the two companions anything and that he learned from them. If he had spoken of Ali's executorship and his succession to the Messenger, he would be only following the two companions. Ibn Saba did not hear the Messenger, but Abu Tharr and Ammar heard him saying at Ghadeer Khum: "Whoever I am his "Moula" (leader), Ali is his Moula."⁴⁵ The two companions heard the Messenger saying: "I am leaving for you that which if you uphold, you will never go astray: The Book of God, and the members of my House. Beware how you shall treat them after me."⁴⁶ These two companions, no doubt, understood from the statement of the prophet that the Messenger was appointing Ali his successor.

TO DISCREDIT ABU THARR AND AMMAR IS TO DISCREDIT THE PROPHET

As we conclude our discussion and analysis of Saif Ibn Omar Al-Tameemi's report, we come to the following conclusions:

44. Al-Termathi, his authentic *Sunan*, part 4, p. 332 (Hadith no. 3884)

45. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 110.

46. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 109.

1) The subscribers to Saif Ibn Omar's report who are trying to smear the Shi-ite Muslims are actually smearing Abu Tharr and Ammar Ibn Yasir before they smear the contemporary Shi-ites.

2) The two companions were following the line of the Prophet, because he testified to their righteousness, truth, and rightfulness. The Shi-ites follow the same line.

3) This means that he who discredits the two companions actually discredits the Prophet himself.

I do not believe that Ibn Saba ever existed. I believe that he was only a fabricated story to ruin the reputation of the "Shi-ites" (the followers of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet).

Dr. Taha Hussein observed that what was reported about "Ibn Al-Souda" (Abdullah Ibn Saba) was obviously made up and fabricated. It was invented when the debate between the Shi-ites and other Islamic schools was in progress. The enemies of the Shi-ites wanted to admit into the teaching of this school a Jewish element for the sake of destroying their reputation. Taha Hussein said: Ibn Al-Souda was nothing but an imagination. And if he had truly existed, he was not that important as the historians try to portray him and describe his activity during the days of Othman and in the first year of the caliphate of Ali. He is an imaginary person, treasured by the enemies of the Shi-ites in order to harm the Shi-ites.⁴⁷

THE SOURCE OF THE LEGEND

The source of the story of Abdullah Ibn Saba or Ibn Al-Souda was Saif Ibn Omar Al-Tameemi who lived in the second century after the Hijra. Al-Tabari, Ibn Asakir, and Ibn Abu Bakr took the story of Ibn Saba from Saif Ibn Omar. The rest of the historians such as Ibn Al-Atheer, Ibn Kutheyer, Ibn Khaldoon, and Abu Al-Fida took the story from Al-Tabari.

47. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnatul-Kubra*, part 1, pp. 98-99.

This Saif Ibn Omar was one of the forgers of the hadiths and the reports of the events of history. The Muslim scholars who are specialized in Hadith have expressed their opinion about Saif:

Ibn Mu-een (died in 277) said: Saif is a weak reporter.

Al-Nisa-i (died in 303) said: Saif is a weak reporter.

Abu Dawood (died in 317) said: Saif is nothing.

Al-Hakim (died in 405) said: Saif is abandoned and accused of being heretic.

Ibn Hayyan said: Saif reportedly forged stories and attributed them to reliable reporters, and he was accused of being heretic.

Al-Dar Qutni (died in 385) said: Saif is a weak reporter and was abandoned.

Ibn Hajar (died 850) said: Saif is a weak reporter.⁴⁸

This Saif reported many Hadiths which are opposed to the well known facts of history and to the facts which are reported by numerous reliable reporters. He also reported events which are inconceivable.

The resentment of Ali towards the election of Abu Bakr was reported by outstanding hadith-reporters, and this is known to the students of history. What Al-Tabari reported through Saif Ibn Omar about Ali's election of Abu Bakr is the following:

“Ali was at his house when he was informed that Abu Bakr is receiving the pledge of allegiance. Ali hurriedly left his home without having his cloak on him because he did not like to lose time. He came to the mosque and pledged his allegiance to Abu Bakr, then sat with him and sent after his cloak. When it was brought to him, he put it on and remained with Abu Bakr.”⁴⁹

It is a well known fact of history which was reported

48. Sayed Murtadha Al-Askari, in his book, *Abdullah Ibn Saba*, p. 26.

49. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 3 (Event in the 11th year, A. H.), p. 201 (conveyed by Sayed Al-Askari, *Abdullah Ibn Saba*).

by numerous reliable sources that Ali did not accept the caliphate of Abu Bakr at the beginning and refused to give him the pledge of allegiance, and he continued to do so until his wife Fatima Al-Zahra died. Al-Bukhari and Muslim through their channels to Ayesah reported the following:

“ . . . Fatima, daughter of the Messenger of God, sent to Abu Bakr, asking him for her inheritance from her father out of what God has given him in Medina, Fadak, and what remained from the “fifth of Kheibar” . . . ; Abu Bakr said: The Messenger of God said: “We (the Prophets) are not to be inherited (materially); what we have left is (or as) charity.” Abu Bakr refused to give Fatima anything. She was outraged by what he did, and she refused to speak to him until she died. She lived six months after the Messenger of God. When she died, Ali buried her at night and did not inform Abu Bakr of her death. Ali prayed on her. People were warm towards Ali when Fatima was still living. When she died, Ali lost that warmness. Thus, he sought to make peace with Abu Bakr, and he pledged his allegiance to him.”⁵⁰

Of Saif’s reports of events which are inconceivable are the following:

Al-Tabari reported that Saif said that Abu Bakr sent Al-Ala Ibn Al-Hadrami to fight the deserters of the faith in Al-Bahrain, and that he and his army went through Al-Dahna and that their camels ran away from them in the desert during the night and that they became thirsty. Then water appeared to them. They drank from it and washed, then their camels came back.

Abu Huraira filled a container of his with water, but he left it near the water. When they departed from that place, they came back to it. They did not find the water but Abu Hurairah found his container.

Saif also reported that Al-Ala and his army went to Daren traveling by sea on their camels for twenty-four

50. Al-Bukhari, his *Sahih*, part 5, p. 177 (chapter of Battle of Khaibar). Muslim also reported it in his *Sahih*, part 12, p.77.

hours, and the water of the sea did not cover the hooves of the camels. He mentioned also that after the army passed through the sea, it was able to obtain victory against the people of Dareen.⁵¹

But Al-Balathori, on the other hand, reported the invasion of Al-Bahrain through a source other than Saif, and mentioned that Al-Ala invaded Zarah and Dareen during the reign of Omar (rather than the reign of Abu Bakr). He reported that the inhabitants of Zarah made a peace treaty with Al-Ala and that they agreed to give him a third of the city and a third of what was in it of gold and silver; that he would take half of what belongs to them outside the city and that Al-Akhnas Ibn Al-Amiri said to him that they did not include in the peace treaty what they had in Dareen. Thus, he advised him of a shallow passage between Zarah and Dareen in the sea and that Al-Ala and his army went through that shallow passage and invaded Dareen.⁵²

Al-Tabari reported through Saif that when Saad Ibn Abu Waqass and his army arrived to a place called Othaib Al-Hijanat, he sent Assim Ibn Amr to the lower part of the Euphrates. Assim came to Maisan, seeking sheep or cows, but he did not find any. The cows fortified themselves by going into a wooded area. Assim went and looked until he found a man near the area. He asked him about the cows and the sheep, and the man swore to him that he did not know anything about their location. But the man was the shepherd of those animals. Upon this, a bull spoke clearly in Arabic, saying what means: "By God, he lied to you; We are here." Assim went in and drove the cows out and brought them to the camp.⁵³

Thus, we find that Saif reports in the two stories what is unbelievable. A water appears and the whole army drinks from it. Then it disappears shortly after they leave it; an

51. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 3, conveyed by Al-Askari, *Abdullah Ibn Saba*.

52. Al-Balathori, *Futooh Al-Buldan*, pp. 92-93 (conveyed by Al-Askari, *Abdullah Ibn Saba*, p. 117).

53. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 3, p. 12.

army goes through the sea for twenty-four hours, and the water of the sea does not cover the hooves of the camels, and a cow speaks the grammatical Arabic language.

This is only some of Saif's fabricated lies. It is amazing that Al-Tabari who was an outstanding Muslim historian relied upon Saif's reports, while his own reports testify to Saif's incredibility.

Ibn Saba was nothing but one of his fabricated lies. He tried to cover up the truth by alleging that the revolution against Othman was not caused by Othman's mishandling the public funds and giving it to his relatives and friends, and appointing his transgressor relatives as governors of the Muslims.

He tried to say that the cause of that revolution was the conspiracies of Abdullah Ibn Saba who never was mentioned by any reliable historians before Saif Ibn Omar. Saif wanted to acquit Ayeshah, Mother of Believers, Talhah, and Al-Zubeir from the responsibility of the Battle of Bassrah. Thus, he invented the story of a conspiracy by Ibn Saba and his followers for starting the Battle.

Al-Tabari and the historians who followed him in recording the story of Saif Ibn Omar should have asked themselves the two following questions:

1. If Ibn Saba had existed and had such revolutionary and destructive activity, why did not Ayeshah mention him and his activities when she went to Bassrah trying to turn people against Ali and his followers? Why did she not mention that those who made the revolution against Othman and those who killed him were followers of a Jewish Arab that was conspiring against Islam and that these conspirators were the followers of Ali and the callers for his election? She did not mention that, though she came to Bassrah for the sole purpose of turning its inhabitants against Ali. Had the story of Abdullah Ibn Saba been truthful, Ayeshah would have made it the main theme of her speeches. Had she mentioned that, she would have hurt Ali and his followers a great deal.

It could be said that Mother of the Believers was not aware of the intrigues and conspiracies of Ibn Saba

because he used to work secretly. But the report which speaks of Ibn Saba says also that he came to Bassrah and formed a revolutionary cell in it, and that Abdullah Ibn Amir who was the Omayyad governor of Bassrah expelled him from Bassrah when he discovered his subversive activities.⁵⁴

Abdullah Ibn Amir was with Ayeshah when she departed from Mecca, and he was with her when she came to Bassrah. Why did he not give her that information about Ibn Saba if Ibn Saba had really existed? Tens of Omayyads were with Mother of the Believers, and these people were fully aware of the situation of the Islamic cities and communities and what was taking place in them. These Omayyads were the rulers of the cities during the time of Othman, and they were not simple people.

Ayeshah did not mention Abdullah Ibn Saba and his activity before the Battle of Bassrah, nor on the day of the Battle. Nor did she mention anything about Ibn Saba and his activities after the Battle, though she lived a good number of years afterwards. None of the Omayyads who accompanied her (such as Abdullah Ibn Amir and Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam who were arch enemies of the Imam) ever mentioned anything about Ibn Saba and his activities. Had the story of Ibn Saba been true, the voices of these people would have filled the Muslim World.

2. Granted that Ayeshah did not mention Ibn Saba because she did not know about his intrigues and conspiracies, but why did Muaweyah refrain from mentioning that?

The report which speaks of Ibn Saba mentioned that he went to Damascus and that he turned Abu Tharr against Muaweyah and Othman and that Ibn Saba spoke of his destructive opinions to two other companions of the Prophet: Abu Al-Darda and Abadah Ibn Al-Samit. The report added that Abadah resented the statements of Ibn Saba and took him to Muaweyah and informed Muaweyah

54. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 72.

that Ibn Saba is the one who turned Abu Tharr against him . . . , and with this information Muaweyah drove Ibn Saba out of Damascus.⁵⁵ Ibn Saba later went to Egypt, and Abdullah Ibn Abu Sarh (the governor of Egypt) also knew about Ibn Saba.⁵⁶

Muaweyah used to give large amounts of money to people in order to defame the Imam by inventing stories that would damage his reputation and the reputation of his followers. Muaweyah was the one who decreed that the Imam Ali should be cursed every Friday at every Islamic Mosque. This order was issued after the death of the Imam. Had the story of Ibn Saba been true, Muaweyah would have considered it most important and would have held it by his two hands, and he would not have failed to mention it every day.

Yet, history does not mention that Muaweyah or anyone of his appointed governors ever spoke one word concerning Ibn Saba.

History has preserved numerous messages from Muaweyah in which he directed whatever he could of false accusations towards the Imam. His main goal in those messages was to smear the Imam by saying that he protected the killers of Othman and those who participated in the revolution against him. Yet, he did not mention in any of those messages that the killers of Othman or the participants in that revolution had any relation with a man named Ibn Saba. Had the legend of Ibn Saba had any truth to it, the pen of Muaweyah would have flown with it, and it would have come on his tongue and the tongues of his followers during the days of his reign and the reign of the rest of the Omayyads.

The truth is that Ibn Saba was not dangerous to the unity of the Muslims or a cause in dividing the Muslims because Ibn Saba did not exist. The fact is that one of the main reasons for dividing the Muslims and spreading

55. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 283.

56. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 341 (Events of 35th year A.H.)

animosity among them was Saif Ibn Omar who invented the story of Abdullah Ibn Saba.

Saif elaborately fabricated the story and Al-Tabari accepted it. Thus, it was spread and became popular among the Muslim masses. This fabrication brought a mutual hatred among the Muslims and divided them into two parties, separated by considerable distance. Only God knows how many innocent Muslims lost their lives as a result of the poison with which Saif Ibn Omar sprayed the Islamic atmosphere through his fabrications.



The Battle of Siffeen

The Imam came to Kufa after the end of the Battle of Bassrah, and he made Kufa his capital. The people of Kufa were the builders of his army, whose support was indispensable in defeating his opponents in Bassrah. There were no other people upon whom he could rely. The majority of the people of Bassrah were against him, and they were not expected to become sincere towards him after the war of Bassrah had eliminated many of their loved ones. People of Hijaz were not reliable because they were few compared to the people of the rest of the Islamic provinces. People of Syria were followers of his enemy Muaweyah. The Muslims of Egypt were incapable of offering what he needed of an army for subduing the secessionists.

The Imam stayed about four months in his new capital preparing what he needed to meet Muaweyah, the most dangerous among his opponents to the unity of the nation. He was the most capable among them to challenge the authority of the Imam and their least scrupulous in religion. Muaweyah had declared before the Battle of Bassrah his refusal to join the electors of the Imam and his challenge to his authority. By this, he actually separated Syria from the body of the Islamic State and declared its secession. He added to this his hostility to the central authority and that he was at war with that authority, using

revenge for the blood of Othman as an excuse. His secesional movement started before the movement of the three leaders.

The Imam sent, after he was elected, a message to Muaweyah which was carried by his messenger Subrah Al-Juhani informing him of his election by the companions and asking him along with his followers to join his electors. Muaweyah, after a long silence, sent Qubaisah Al-Absi and gave him a sealed letter addressed from Muaweyah to Ali. He ordered him to enter Medina raising the letter and holding its lower part and told him what to say.

When Qubaisah entered Medina, people knew that Muaweyah was defiant. He gave what was in his hand to the Imam. The Imam opened it and did not find anything in it, and the following dialogue took place:

The Imam: What did you leave behind you (in Damascus)?

Qubaisah: (after he asked for, and was given, immunity): I left behind me angry people who would not be satisfied but with a death punishment for Othman's blood.

The Imam: Whose death?

Qubaisah: Yours! I left also sixty thousand old men crying under the shirt of Othman which is hung on the pulpit in Damascus.

The Imam: Do they want me to pay for the blood of Othman? Am I not bereaved by the death of Othman? God, I declare to Thee my innocence of the blood of Othman. By this, the killers of Othman have been spared unless God wants the opposite. For if He wants something, He would necessarily have it.¹

The answer of the Imam to this obvious challenge was

1. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 104.

to start mobilization of soldiers for subduing this dangerous defiant. He gave the banner to his son Mohamad Ibn "Al-Hanafeyah" (the mother of Mohammad). He gave the leadership of a portion of his army to Abdullah Ibn Abbass. He gave Omar Ibn Abu Selemah the leadership of another portion of his army. He appointed Abu Leila Al-Jarrah the commander of his advancing division. He appointed Qutham Ibn Abbass his successor in Medina. He wrote to Qais Ibn Saad his appointed governor of Egypt, Othman Ibn Hunaif his appointed governor of Bassrah, and Abu Musa Al-Ashaari his appointed governor of Kufa to try to mobilize people for a march on Syria.² He called upon the people of Medina to participate in that Holy mission. He spoke to them saying:

"Certainly, our safety would be secured within the authority of God. Give Him your obedience truthfully and willingly. By God, you either do that or God will remove from you the authority of Islam; then He will not bring it back to you until the authority of Islam shrinks and recoils in Medina. Stand up to these people who want to divide your nation. May God reform through you what people of other areas had corrupted and by this, you would be paying only what is due from you."³

The Imam went on preparing for the march on Syria, trying to mobilize all that which was within his reach for the confrontation with this aggressor party. But the news of the departure of Ayesah, Talhah, and Al-Zubeir to Bassrah came to the Imam. Thus, he was forced to delay his march on Syria until after the conclusion of the emerging crisis.⁴

The Imam did not delay his march on Syria because the three leaders were more dangerous to the caliphate than Muaweyah. He did that because the departure of the three leaders to Iraq added to the danger of Muaweyah a

2. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, pp. 104-105.

3. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 105.

4. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 5.

new danger. If this could not be dealt with soon, the Imam would be deprived of all military and financial assistance which he needed to subdue the main enemy, Muaweyah.

The three leaders with all their forces would not represent a great danger against the unity of the nation if they were alone challenging the authority of the Imam. The Imam would be able to subdue their forces easily if they were alone without Muaweyah. Their rebellion was extemporaneous. They did not have what Muaweyah had of resourcefulness, strong army, and wide popularity in a large Islamic province. As a matter of fact, people of Bassrah were divided in their loyalty towards them, and a party from the people of Bassrah fought them as soon as they entered and before the Imam came to confront them.

Muaweyah, on the contrary, was dangerous by himself, even if the three leaders were not with him. He was wily and resourceful. His movement was not extemporaneous. He prepared for it for two decades. He was in a province whose inhabitants were obedient to his order. He had a huge and well organized army, ready to comply with his command. He was capable of challenging the authority of the Imam even if he did not have any helpers from outside Syria.

Therefore, the biggest concern of the Imam, after he finished the Battle of Bassrah, was to prepare for facing this enemy who was dangerous to the unity of the nation and its future.

To leave no excuse for Muaweyah, the Imam sent him a message with Jareer Ibn Abdullah Al-Bajali, inviting him to join the majority of the Muslims who elected him. He mentioned in that message that those who elected him were those who elected Abu Bakr, Omar, and Othman, and that the right of the decision about the caliphate was only for the migrant and the Medinite companions. If they elected a man, their election would be binding to the rest of the Muslims. If anyone tries to break away by accusation or innovation, they would bring him back. If such a person persists in his secessionary way, they have to fight him for taking a road other than the road of the

believers. The Imam also said to Muaweyah in this message the following:

“Talhah and Al-Zubeir elected me, then they broke their covenant with me. Their breach of covenant is like their faith desertion. I fought them after I left no excuse for them until the truth came, and the cause of God prevailed while they were averse.

“I invite you to join the Muslims by pledging your allegiance to the new administration. I prefer peace, but if you persist in your opposition, I will fight you, seeking the help of God against you . . .”

The excuse which Muaweyah used in his deceptive movement for reaching the caliphate was the blood of Othman, and that the Imam did not punish the killers of Othman, though they were around him. The Imam, therefore, included in his message what refutes his argument.

“And you have spoken repeatedly about the killers of Othman. Join the rest of the Muslims who elected me, then ask me to try the ones whom you accused. I will judge between you and them according to the Book of God . . .

“Muaweyah, if you look at the matter through your mind rather than your selfishness, you will find me the most innocent in relation to the blood of Othman and that I was completely isolated of his affairs, unless you deliberately make false accusations. You may do that if you want to. You ought to know that you are from the ones who were freed by the Prophet at the conquest of Mecca who are forbidden from reaching the caliphate. They cannot be a factor in deciding the leadership. Nor would they be consulted in the Islamic affairs or elected by the Muslim electors. I have sent to you Jareer Ibn Abdullah Al-Bajali. He is faithful and a migrant with a good past. Pledge your allegiance to me through him, and there is no power but by God.”

Jareer carried the message to Muaweyah and added his

5. Abdul Fattah Abdul-Maqsoud, *Ali Ibn Abi Talib*, part 4, pp. 31-32.

own power of persuasion. Muaweyah, however, refused to answer him positively or negatively, trying to gain time in preparation for the future. Finally, his expected answer came.

It was not expected that any mediation or means of convincing would succeed in bringing Muaweyah to the right road. He believed that he is in a strong position to challenge the Imam, and he would not do anything else. He had under his leadership about one hundred thousand fighters, and he was still with all his financial and manpower. He did not enter any battle, and he did not suffer any loss of property, funds or men. The Imam, on the other hand, was forced to enter the bloody Battle of Bassrah in which his supporters had to pay a great deal of their blood and wealth.

The enemies of the Imam were on the increase and the supporters of Muaweyah were in a continuous increase. The Syrian treasury was in Muaweyah's hands, and he used it as he used his own funds, purchasing with it the conscience of the seekers of selfish interests, and they were numerous.

The Opportunist Amr

The wily Amr Ibn Al-Auss was most outstanding among those who sold their principles and conscience. The co-operation between Amr and Muaweyah was a very distinguished event in the history of opportunism. History knew (and Muaweyah who was seeking to avenge the blood of Othman also knew) that Amr Ibn Al-Auss was from the outstanding agitators against Othman.⁶ This did not prevent Muaweyah from covenanting the wily Amr for an alliance against the Imam with the pretext of seeking the

6. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 141.
Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 560.

avenge for the blood of Othman, of which Amr was guilty.⁷ The price Muaweyah had to pay to Amr for his alliance with him was the governorship and the tax revenues of Egypt as long as Amr lived, if Muaweyah wins the struggle against the Imam.^{7a}

The Imam was determined to try to subdue Muaweyah and his followers and bring them back to the bulk of the nation and thwart their secessionist movement. He led his army to Syria and when he came to the land of Siffeen, he found Muaweyah and his army had already occupied the bank of the Euphrates. The Imam was forced to camp away from the water.

IDEALIST VERSUS OPPORTUNIST

Muaweyah would not hesitate to use for his end any means, even if it is extremely criminal. He occupied the bank of the Euphrates and thought he could prevail against Ali and his army through the terrible weapon of thirst. He decided to prevent his opponents from reaching the water.⁸ Thus, Ali and his army had to surrender or die of thirst. Thirst would make them easy victims, and Muaweyah's army in possession of supplies, food, and water, would be able to destroy Ali and his army. Muaweyah thought victory was within his reach. Destroying scores of thousands of Muslims through this method would not shake the conscience of Muaweyah because his conscience was dead.

It would not shake his conscience to kill Ali and his

7. Abdul-Fattah Abdul-Maqsoud, *Ali Ibn Abi Talib*, part 4, pp. 44-45.

And Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnatul-Kubra*, part 2, pp. 62-63, (8th edition).

Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, pp. 460-461.

7a. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 5, p. 39.

8. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 145.

Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 21, pp. 571-572.

Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnatul-Kubra*, part 2, p. 71.

two sons Al-Hassan and Al-Hussein, members of the House of the Prophet. Nor would it shake his conscience to kill them by thirst, though it meant killing by thirst the majority of the companions of the Messenger who were "Badrians" and "Ohodians." Why should the conscience of Muaweyah be shaken for committing such an ugly crime? Is not his aim to defeat the truth and the people of the truth? What is the difference between one death and another death? There is not any difference in the eyes of Muaweyah between reaching victory through the sword or through annihilation by the weapon of thirst.

The annihilation of Ali and his camp through thirst was preferable to Muaweyah over killing them by sword. Fighting Ali and his camp by conventional weapons does not secure Muaweyah's victory, but annihilation through thirst would definitely secure it.

However, Amr Ibn Al-Auss, his chief advisor, counselled him not to try such a terrible weapon, yet Amr was not more righteous than Muaweyah. Amr thought that this method, in spite of its ugliness, would not secure victory. It may bring him only failure and curse. Ali, the man of unusual bravery, would not die from thirst while he is in command of a huge army. But Muaweyah refused the advice of his ally.⁹

The Imam told Muaweyah in a message that he did not come to fight for water. He came to uphold the truth and defeat falsehood. He came to bring the Muslims together after the leaders of falsehood put them in two separate camps. Muaweyah did not take the Imam's message seriously, and he did not leave the Imam any open avenue but to fight for water.¹⁰

The Imam waged a battle for the water, and this was his first Holy Battle against Muaweyah and his camp. He succeeded in occupying the bank of the Euphrates and

9. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 145.

Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 542.

10. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 145.

driving the Omayyad army away from the river. By this, the situation was reversed. Now it became possible for the Imam and his army to do to their opponents what their opponents were trying to do to them. It became possible for the Imam to annihilate his opponents by their own weapons. Would the Imam do that?

Here the history of war kneels to glorify Ali Ibn Abu Talib. Here Ali stands among the leaders of nations, towering like a mountain as he gives generations of humanity his impressive lesson. The religion of Islam stands against all kinds of wars of genocide and annihilation. The leaders of the nations of the twentieth century have legalized the annihilation of civilians through atomic bombs and so far have failed to prohibit the use of such weapons. The faith of Islam (over fourteen centuries ago) had prohibited what was much less than a nuclear war. It prohibited killing children, women, elderly people, and blind enemies. It prohibits the demolishing of houses of the enemies and destruction of their orchards.¹¹

I cannot conceive that anyone after the Messenger could take the attitude of the Imam Ali towards his enemy after his enemy had given him every justification to annihilate him and his army by his own weapon. The leaders of the Imam's army and their soldiers shouted: Prevent them from water as they prevented us from water. The Imam replied: "God has given you victory against them because of their injustice and aggression. Certainly, the issue is more important than depriving them of water."¹² Then he sent to Muaweyah this message: "We shall not treat you as you treated us. Come to the water, we are equal."¹³

11. Al-Hurr Al-Amili, *Wasa-il-al-Shiah*, part 11, pp. 43-44

12. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, pp. 145-146.

Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 572.

13. Abdul-Fattah Abdul-Maqsoud, *Al-Imam Ali Ibn Abu Talib*, part 4, p. 190.

NEW EFFORTS FOR PEACE

The Imam tried again to bring about peace. His aim was to avoid shedding blood, and to bring the Muslims back to unity. His ambassadors went to Muaweyah, but mediations and negotiations failed to bring any result. Muaweyah was hoping to be the ruler of the Muslim World, and nothing would stop him from trying to reach that end.

Skirmishes between the two camps were started and remained limited. A regiment from one side and a regiment from the other side faced each other on one day. On the following day, another two regiments faced each other. The situation continued this way until the month of Muharram began. All hostilities ceased in observation of the sanctity of the month. The Imam went back to his peaceful efforts during the month of Muharram, and the result was not better than in his previous efforts.¹⁴

As the month of Muharam ended, the two camps went back to their skirmishes and limited battles. The Imam wanted to prevent both camps the expected heavy losses if the two armies faced each other in a decisive battle.

These battles did not prevent men from the two camps to meet and debate each other. Most of the tribes were living in both provinces: Iraq, and Syria. Thus, they had their special blood relationship. Muaweyah contacted a number of leaders of the Iraqi army. He sent them his messengers and spoke to some of them directly trying to persuade them by promising them important rewards if they leave the camp of the Imam and join him.¹⁵ The followers of the Imam also tried to persuade their relatives in Syria to join the camp of the truth. The Imam, however, did not allow himself to try to buy his opponents with public funds or to promise their ambitious leaders important positions.

There were many people looking for their interests

14. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 149.

15. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 148.

among the followers of the Imam. It would be sufficient to mention men such as Ashaath Ibn Qais, about whom Abu Bakr said: Whenever Ashaath sees an evil he assists it.”

History records that Muaweyah sent his brother Utbah to Ashaath, trying to attract him. He offered him proposals and Ashaath was not unreceptive.

Finally, the Imam decided to meet Muaweyah in a decisive battle. The two huge armies met and the most important battle the Muslims had ever waged until that time began. The two armies fought each other all day and a big portion of the night. They resumed the battle on the following day, and the right wing of the Imam’s army was defeated and ran away. By this, the core of his army was weakened. Thus, the Imam had to move from the heart of the army to its left side where the fighters were from the tribe of Rabi-aah.¹⁶ When the Rabi-ites witnessed the Imam among them, they realized the magnitude of their responsibility towards the protection of the Imam. They fought bravely, fearing that the Imam might be killed while he is among them, and that this will put them in an eternal shame. Therefore, they decided to prevent that at any cost.¹⁷

Malik Al-Ashtar went on trying to bring the retreaters back. They heard his voice and came back. The army was back again in action, and the war went on with its utmost cruelty and ugliness for the whole day and night.¹⁸

MARTYRDOM OF AMMAR IBN YASIR

On that day when the right of the Imam’s army retreated, an outstanding companion of the Holy Prophet, Ammar Ibn Yasir, who was 93 years old stood between the two camps. He spoke loudly, saying: By God, if they hit

16. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 152.

17. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 152.

18. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 152.

us until they drive us from here to the orchards of Hejar, we will continue to believe that we are the people of truth, and that they are people of falsehood.¹⁹ Then he said pointing to the banner of Muaweyah: "By God, under the banner of the Messenger, I fought the man of this banner three times, and the man of the banner is not more righteous now than before."²⁰

Ammar had an appointment with his martyrdom at the hands of the aggressor party. The Messenger of God said to him in the presence of many companions: "Son of Sumayah (Sumayah was Ammar's mother), the aggressor party shall kill you."²¹ This statement was well known to the companions. Amr Ibn Al-Auss was one of the reporters of this hadith, and people of Damascus heard that from him. His narration of this hadith caused a deep disturbance in the camp of Muaweyah, days before the decisive battle began.²² Muaweyah blamed Amr for reporting this hadith. He expected Ammar to be with the Imam and through his presence, Muaweyah's followers will discover that they belong to the aggressor party.

Ammar asked for a drink before he entered the decisive battle of Siffeen during which he obtained his martyrdom. A lady brought him milk mixed with water. When he saw the drink, he exclaimed "Allahu Akbar" (God is The Great). This is what my beloved, the Messenger of God, promised me when he said: Ammar, the aggressor party shall kill you and your last drink in this world will be milk.²³ He took his drink, then he rushed on, saying: Who wants to go to Paradise? Paradise is under the shades of the spears. He who is thirsty comes to the

19. Ibn Saad, *Al-Tabaqat*, part 3, p. 257.

20. Ibn Saad, *Al-Tabaqat*, part 3, p. 257.

21. Ibn Saad, *Al-Tabaqat*, part 3, p. 259.

22. Ibn Saad, *Al-Tabaqat*, part 3, p. 259.

Ibn-Al-Atheer, also reported this in his *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 158.

23. Ibn Saad, *Al-Tabaqat*, part 3, p. 258.

Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnatul-Kubra*, part 2, p. 78.

water, and the water will be drunk today. Today, I will meet my beloved ones: Mohammad and his party.”²⁴

Ammar went on fighting and urging Hashim Ibn Utba Ibn Abu Waqass to advance (Hashim was the bearer of the banner of Ammar’s regiment. He was of the best of the Qureshite warriors and very beloved by the Imam. He lost one of his eyes at one of the battles.) Ammar sometimes joked with him saying: One-eyed, advance. Then he tells him: Advance, I redeem you with my father and mother. And Hashim calms Ammar down, saying: Take it easy “Abu Yaqthan” (Ammar’s code name). The war makes you move too fast.²⁵ But neither the words of Hashim, nor the ninety three years could minimize the speed of Abu Yaqthan. He wanted to hurry to Paradise. He had an appointment with his beloved, the great Messenger. He wanted to meet him and he did.

Khuzaimah Ibn Thabit, the man of two testimonies, (The Prophet had made his testimony equal to the testimony of two men) was with the Imam in Siffeen, but he did not fight. When Ammar was killed, Khuzaimah realized that the aggressor party is the camp of Muaweyah. He entered his tent. He took a bath and put his armor on, then he went fighting until he died.²⁶

THE BIG CONSPIRACY

The war continued with all its violence and intensity during the third day, and weakness became obvious in the camp of Muaweyah. The Imam’s army almost reached the tent of Muaweyah. He wanted to run away but he felt ashamed and so he stayed.²⁷

Before noon while the battle was progressing in its intensity, victory became within the reach of the Imam’s

24. Ibn Saad, *Al-Tabaqat*, part 3, p. 258.

Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnatul-Kubra*, part 2, p. 78.

25. Ibn Saad, *Al-Tabaqat*, part 3, p. 161.

26. Ibn Saad, *Al-Tabaqat*, part 3, p. 259.

27. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 154.

camp. While his army was about to defeat the aggressor party, copies of the Holy Qur'an were hoisted in Muaweyah's camp and voices were heard saying: This is the Book of God. It is between you and us from its beginning to end. Remember God. Remember God for the future of the Arabs. Remember God for the future of Islam. Who shall protect the borders of Syria if the Syrian people perish? Who shall protect the borders of Iraq if the Iraqi people perish?²⁸

Muaweyah had already despaired from obtaining a military victory. He was facing a decisive defeat on the battlefield. Now he resorted to the Holy Qur'an. The invitation to accept the rule of the Holy Qur'an was not an invention of Muaweyah and Ibn Al-Auss. You may recall that the Imam called upon the camp of Ayesah, Talhah, and Al-Zubier at Bassrah, before the beginning of its battle, to surrender to the Holy Qur'an. A youth from Kufa volunteered to carry the Holy Qur'an, face the people of Bassrah and invite them to accept the rules of the Holy Qur'an. His invitation was rejected and the youth was killed.²⁹

Muaweyah and Ibn Al-Auss had decided to resort to the invitation of the rule of the Holy Qur'an when they realized that their military defeat was inevitable. Muaweyah evidently had prepared the atmosphere for such an invitation through his secret contact with some of the leaders of the Imam's army, particularly Ashaath Ibn Qais, the head of the tribe of Kindah whose members were numerous in Kufa.

Muaweyah was almost certain that hoisting the copies of the Holy Qur'an would lead to a division in the Imam's camp whether the Imam would accept or refuse the invitation. What Muaweyah expected happened. Voices from the Imam's camp were raised asking to stop the fight and accept the rule of the Holy Qur'an.

Those who wanted to stop hostilities were three cate-

28. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, pp. 160-161.

29. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 509.

gories. Each of them had a motive that differed from that of the other two categories. The scrupulous category was made up of religious fanatics. They thought that rejecting the invitation to the rule of the Book and continuing the battle would be a major sin which Muslims are not supposed to commit. They forgot that their Imam is the most knowledgeable of the Holy Qur'an and the Islamic law, and that he is the most adherent to the Islamic principles.

This category included a great number of readers of the Holy Qur'an who thought that they knew all the Islamic law and appointed themselves as the protectors of Islam. This kind of religious people are numerous in every generation.

There was another category of people who were anxious to stop the fight, led by conspirators who were collaborating with the enemy, believing their co-operation with the enemy will bring them some material wealth or high positions.

The third category believed that their obedience to the Imam in the two battles of Bassrah and Siffeen had cost them dearly because they paid with the blood of their children, brothers and relatives. Their main concern was to save their lives. They could not care less for what happened to Islam and the Muslims.

The Imam stood up trying to show them the right road saying to them: The resort to the Holy Qur'an is only a conspiracy planned by Muaweyah and his advisors. I know them as young and old. They never were people of the Qur'an or religion. All they wanted was to avoid the catastrophe of defeat.³⁰

There was within the camp of the Imam some people who had both sincerity and wisdom (these were a minority compared to the others.) These people agreed with the Imam and urged him to continue the war and to ignore the many voices which were calling for cessation of hostility. These people were led by Malik Al-Ashtar. But their

30. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 161.

voices were drowned by the voice of the majority who wanted to end the battle.

Al-Ashtar was still pushing hard towards Muaweyah seeing that victory was within his reach, but those who wanted to end the war surrounded the Imam. They threatened to desert him and to fight him and even to take him as a captive and hand him to Muaweyah.³¹ They asked him to order Al-Ashtar to discontinue his march. The Imam found himself between two alternatives. If he continued the war, he would be forced to fight his enemy and the biggest portion of his own camp with only a minority that was still obedient to him. Otherwise, he could discontinue the war and victory would slip from his hand. He chose to discontinue the war feeling that his obedient followers may be annihilated without reaching a result which would improve the just side.

The Imam found himself facing a coup by which his authority came to an end. Al-Ashtar came back from the front and urged him to fight those who disobey him with those who obey him. The Imam said: "Malik, I was a leader, but now I have become a follower." However, the conspiracy was twofold:

1. Discontinuation of war and the acceptance of the invitation to the rule of the Holy Qur'an through two arbiters.

2. The arbiters from the Iraqi camp had to be Abu Musa Al-Ashaari who was the governor of Kufa before the beginning of the Battle of Bassrah. The reader may remember the efforts which this man made to prevent the people of Kufa from joining the Imam in his confrontation with the army of the three leaders at Bassrah.

Muaweyah achieved all that through the stupidity of the religious fanatics along with some traitors in the Imam's army. The collaborators and the fanatic readers acted and sounded as if they were burdening the Imam, instead of Muaweyah, with the responsibility of the war.

31. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 161.

32. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 163.

Their efforts were directed at challenging the authority of the Imam and preventing him from choosing any arbiter that inclined to his opinion or thought of resuming the fight.

Muaweyah chose Amr Ibn Al-Auss to be his representative, and none of the people of his camp argued with him. The Imam chose Abdullah Ibn Abbas, but Al-Ashaath and his followers said: No two men from Mudhar (the Arab tribes who are neither Rabi-ites nor Yemenites) shall rule us (meaning that Amr Ibn Al-Auss and Abdullah Ibn Abbas both are Qureshites, non-Yemenites and non-Rabi-ites). The fact is that they did not refuse Ibn Abbas for being a Mudharite. His being a Mudharite was taken by Ashaath as a pretext to cover up his intentions. Had Ibn Abbas been against the Imam, Ashaath would have accepted him.

This became obvious when the Imam nominated Malik Al-Ashtar who was a Yeminite. Ashaath rejected him, and so did his tribe saying: Did anyone burn the earth other than Al-Ashtar? They meant that Al-Ashtar was in agreement with the Imam and wants to go back to war in order to defeat the aggressor party. Ashaath and his tribe were actually assistants and collaborators with the aggressor party.

They joined the Imam reluctantly. They did not like his reign or his victory, or everything he stood for. In fact, these people were more harmful to the Imam and more dangerous to his cause than his own enemy Muaweyah.

The Imam was forced to accept the arbitration. He was forced also to accept Abu Musa as the representative of his camp, and the documents of arbitration were written and signed by the two sides. Ashaath was extremely pleased with obtaining such a document, and he went from one division to another of the Iraqi army, reading it to them.³³

33. Al-Tabari, in *History*, part 5, p. 55.

THE TWO ARBITERS

The important points of the document of arbitration were the following:

1. The two arbiters will validate what the Holy Qur'an validates and invalidate what the Holy Qur'an invalidates and that they will follow what they find in it.

2. They should follow the instructions of the Holy Prophet which unite the Muslims and do not separate them.

3. The two arbiters promise God and covenant Him that they will try to bring peace to the nation and will not turn the nation back to division and war.

4. The deadline for their deliberation will be the month of Ramadan, (and if they choose to make the decision before that date or choose to delay it for the interest of the nation, they could do that.)

5. The place of their meeting will be equal in distance between Kufa and Damascus and Hijaz.³⁴

The Holy Qur'an and the hadiths which bring unity to the nation validate the right of Ali who was elected by the companions of the Prophet and who was "brothered" by the Messenger and declared to be the leader of every believer. They invalidate the untruth of Muaweyah who divided the nation and shed the blood of the Muslims for his own interest. Yet, the two arbiters were not expected to validate a truth or to invalidate a falsehood. Neither of the two companions was neutral in the dispute about which they came to issue a fair decision. Ibn Al-Auss was the second in command of the camp which was fighting the Imam. Al-Ashaari was one of five people who were opposed to the Imam and his policy, before the beginning of the Battle of Bassrah.

34. Al-Balathori, *Ansab Al-Ashraaf* (conveyed by Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnatul-Kubra*, part 2, pp. 83-84. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, pp. 162-163.

During that period, Muaweyah was preventing the extension of the Imam's authority to his province and declaring his armed disobedience. The Mother of Believers, Talhah, and Al-Zubeir were occupying Bassrah and hoping to extend their influence to Kufa. While Muaweyah and the three leaders were doing that, Abu Musa was preventing people of Kufa from assisting the Imam in retrieving what the three leaders had usurped from the area of his authority.³⁵

Abu Musa was taking this stand while the Imam was sending to him and to the people of Kufa his messages and messengers, asking people of Kufa to come to his assistance in retrieving his right. Abu Musa was satisfied to keep Bassrah under the authority of the three leaders because he was collaborating with them. He actually was in open defiance of the Imam, covering his intention with his deceptive methods of calling upon people to avoid fighting. Yet, the Holy Qur'an clearly invites the believers to fight any Muslim community that commits aggression against another Muslim community.³⁶ Had Abu Musa had his way during that period, he would have prevented the people of Kufa from joining the Imam, and the Imam's reign would have ended in the first year after his election.

Trusting Abu Musa and Amr Ibn Al-Auss on the right of the Imam was in fact trusting an enemy on the right of his enemy.

What was expected finally took place. The two arbiters continued in their deliberation for a long time. The result of their deliberation was that they agreed to invalidate the leadership of the Imam and Muaweyeh. Abu Musa was the first to declare his decision of invalidating the leadership of the two men. Ibn Al-Auss stood after him to declare the invalidation of the leadership of the Imam and the establishment of the leadership of Muaweyah. Abu Musa accused Amr of being treacherous, breaching an agreement with him.

35. See chapter 23 of this book, section 3.

36. The Holy Qur'an, chapter 49, verse 10.

Had Ibn Al-Auss not been treacherous and agreed with Abu Musa to invalidate the leadership of the Imam and Muaweyah, their invalidation would have had an adverse effect on the Imam, rather than Muaweyah. The Imam was the Caliph, and Muaweyah was only the governor of Syria. Thus, invalidating Muaweyah's caliphate would be meaningless. What does it mean to overthrow a man from an office he does not occupy?

Had the decision of the two arbiters been in accordance with the stipulation of the document of arbitration, the deceptive act of Ibn Al-Auss against Abu Musa would have been considered an assistance to the Imam, rather than to Muaweyah. Had not Ibn Al-Auss done that, the harm to the Imam from the legal point of view would have been greater because their decision would be binding on the Imam and unharmed to Muaweyah. For invalidating Muaweyah as a caliph does not deprive him of any position he had.

Had their decision been in agreement with the Holy Qur'an and the instructions of the Holy Prophet, the deception of Ibn Al-Auss would have been the only barrier from making their decision binding, because it proved that they were in disagreement in their ruling.

But the decision of the two arbiters was opposed to the Holy Qur'an and the instructions of the Holy Prophet even if they had agreed. The Holy Qur'an declares the following:

“If two parties among the believers fall into a quarrel, make ye peace between them. But if one of them transgresses beyond the bounds against the other, then fight ye (all) against the one that transgresses, until it complies with the command of God. If it complies, then make peace between them with justice and be fair. For God loves those who are fair and just.”³⁷

The party of Muaweyah was the aggressor party which refused to obey the command of God. Ali was the legal

37. The Holy Qur'an, chapter 49, verse 10.

Caliph by the appointment of the Holy Prophet according to the followers of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet. He was also the Caliph by a general election which he received from the overwhelming majority of the companions and the inhabitants of Medina, Mecca, Iraq, Egypt, Yemen, and the rest of the Islamic provinces, with the exception of the inhabitants of Syria who were ruled by Muaweyah. Since he was the legal Caliph, it was the duty of the Muslims to obey him. The Holy Qur'an commands the Muslims to obey the leaders from among them: "O you who believe (in Islam) obey God, the messenger and the people of authority from among you . . ."³⁸

The Holy Prophet declared that Ali is the leader of every believer and prayed to the Almighty that He love whoever loves Ali and to be hostile to whoever is hostile to Ali.³⁹ Muaweyah was hostile to the Imam. He fought him and he legalized shedding his blood. And if God responds to the prayer of His Prophet (and no doubt He does), then Muaweyah is an enemy of God by being the enemy of Ali.

Muslim in his *Sahih* reported that the Holy Prophet said "Whoever comes in an open rebellion and parts with the community, then he dies, he will die a pre-Islamic death."⁴⁰ Muaweyah, no doubt, was out of obedience to the legal Caliph.

If anyone has hesitated in judging that Muaweyah was the leader of the aggressor party, he should remember the authentic hadith (whose authenticity is well established) which reported that the Messenger said to Ammar Ibn Yasir while many companions were listening: "Ibn Sumanayyah, the aggressor party shall kill you."⁴¹ The party of Muaweyah is the party that killed that outstanding companion who was a beloved of the Prophet.

38. The Holy Qur'an, chapter 4, verse 58.

39. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 110. The Hadith was reported by more than one hundred companions.

40. Muslim, his *Sahih*, part 12, p. 241.

41. Al-Termathi, his authentic *Sunan*, part 5, p. 233.

This hadith was so well known that Al-Zubeir had a tremor with which the arms he was carrying started to shake at the Battle of Bassrah when he knew that Ammar was in the Imam's camp. He feared that Ammar will be killed at that battle, then Al-Zubeir will be from the aggressor party.⁴²

When Amr Ibn Al-Auss at the Battle of Siffeen was informed that Ammar was killed, he refused to believe it and when he witnessed the body of the martyr, the color of Amr's face was changed. Then he said: Are we the ones who killed him? The one who killed him is the one who brought him,⁴³ and so Muaweyah said. When the Imam heard of that, he ridiculed it saying: "Then the Messenger of God is the one who killed his uncle Hamzah because he is the one who brought him to the Battle of Ohod."

There is no doubt that Abu Musa heard the hadith. He knew that Ammar was killed, and he knew that Muaweyah and his party were the aggressor party and that Ali is the well guided Imam, but all that did not prevent him from deciding to invalidate the leadership of the Imam and overthrow him. This was only because he was an enemy of the Imam. I do not want to say that he did not value what he knew of the Book of God and the words of the Messenger, but I would say that his hatred of the Imam blinded him.

42. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, pp. 510-511.

43. Ibn Saad, *Al-Tabaqat*, part 3, pp. 253-254.

Al-Khawarij (The Seceders)

The group of readers of the Holy Qur'an who attended with the Imam the Battle of Siffeen were the first to call for discontinuation of the war. They were the most insistent on accepting the arbitration and the most violent against the desire of the Imam in continuing the war and refusal of the invitation for arbitration. But these readers, after the document of arbitration was signed, swiftly reversed their attitude and turned one hundred and eighty degrees. They viewed that they had committed a grave error in cessation of hostilities and accepting the arbitration of men, concerning the religion of God. They viewed that the duty of the Imam and their duty was to go back to war immediately without waiting for the decision of the two arbiters.

Probably they thought after deliberation that the rule of God was clear. Muaweyah and his camp were the aggressor party which resorted to war to protect its falsehood. They did not resort to the rule of the Holy Qur'an because they wanted to surrender to its rule, but because they believed that their defeat was inevitable. The rule of God is clear in this matter. There would be no room for accepting the arbitration of two men and letting them try to deliberate and issue a judgment or verdict in a matter which is so clear that it leaves no place for forming any new opinion.

These fanatics forgot that they were the ones who challenged the authority of the Imam and pushed him by force to stop the war and to accept the arbitration and to

sign its document. Now they were trying to force him to breach that covenant which he signed and made God and people witnesses on his acceptance. These religious fanatics raised the slogan of "La Hukma Illa Lillah" (There is no rule but that of God). They meant by this slogan that Islam does not approve choosing two arbitrators for settling a dispute between two Muslim parties. Rule belongs only to God, and it is not legal for men to issue a rule in religious matters.

It is amazing that this slogan had attracted thousands and thousands of Muslims who claimed adherence to the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet. Yet an arbiter of a matter about which two Muslim parties differ is nothing but a judge who is expected to settle that dispute and declare that one of the two sides is right. That the two arbiters are two judges is what the document of arbitration spoke of. It started as follows:

"This is what Ali Ibn Abu Talib and Muaweyah Ibn Abu Sufyan litigated for. Ali litigated for the people of Iraq and those who are of their followers of believers and Muslims . . ."

When did the faith of Islam forbid litigation and appointment of judges and the judges' exercise of their mission in settling disputes? How would disputes be settled if litigation is forbidden? Did the "Khawarij" (Seceders) believe that the Messenger and the Caliphs were not exercising the mission of judges and appointing judges? The legality of issuing a judgment and the necessity of that is only self-evident in our religion.

The Seceders raised the slogan of "There is no Rule but that of God," and I do not think they understood its meaning. Probably they took this slogan from the following Qur'anic verse:

"Certainly the rule belongs only to God. He commanded that you shall not worship but Him . . ."
(12:41)

1. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 162.

Yet, what the verse speaks of is one thing and what the Seceders understood from the verse is something else. The verse meant that the Almighty is the One Who reveals the principles and rules of the religion. He commanded that we (His servants) worship none but Him.

An arbiter or a judge is not the revealer of the religion or a worshipped person. He is only a man whose mission is to apply the rules of God.

If he does that and rules according to what God has revealed, the Muslims are supposed to surrender to his rules. If he rules in a way contrary to what God has revealed, the Muslims are supposed to disobey him.

It is amazing that this extremist party had forgotten that the Almighty said to His Messenger and to the followers of His Messenger: "And judge between them according to what God has revealed and follow not their illegitimate desires . . ." ² The Almighty said also to the people of the Gospel: "And the people of the Gospel should judge according to what God has revealed in it, and whoever rules not in accordance with what was revealed would be the transgressors." ³

He also said to the believers: "Certainly God commanded you to deliver the trusts to whom they belong. And if you judge among people, judge equitably." ⁴

Had the document of arbitration imposed on the Muslims to obey the two arbiters even if they were devious, judging in contradiction with the Holy Qur'an and the instructions of the Holy Prophet, the attitude of the Seceders would have some justification. But the document declared that the arbiters have to validate what the Holy Qur'an validates and invalidate what the Holy Qur'an invalidates. If they do not find in the area of their disagreement an instruction from the Holy Qur'an, they should resort to the authentically reported teaching of the Holy Prophet which unites and does not divide. If the two ar-

2. The Holy Qur'an, chapter 5, verse 53.

3. The Holy Qur'an, chapter 5, verse 51.

4. The Holy Qur'an, chapter 4, verse 58.

biters abide by the stipulation of the document, they would be ruling according to what God has revealed.

Had the rebellious extremists said that the two chosen arbiters were not qualified to issue a judgment, they would have been right and this was the Imam's opinion. But the extremists were the ones who forced him to accept the two arbiters while he knew they were the worst choice.

Ibn Al-Auss was an arch enemy of the Imam. Abu Musa was extremely limited in knowledge and understanding. His past during the days of Omar and Othman indicates his unscrupulousness in religion. His recent past at the beginning of the reign of the Imam indicates that he was following selfish interests. He hated the Imam and did everything in his power to discourage people of Kufa from supporting the Imam to regain his authority in Bassrah.

The two arbiters, undoubtedly, were not qualified to decide in a matter about which the nation was divided. Yet, the Imam was not responsible for choosing them. He accepted the invitation for the arbitration and accepted the two arbiters under pressure and unwillingly.

These extremists themselves were a very important part of the power which forced the Imam to do that.

However, the lack of qualification of the two arbiters for making a decision does not prevent their commission as arbitrators because the acceptance of their decision was conditioned by their adherence to the teaching of the Holy Book and the instructions of the Holy Prophet.

VIOLENT EXTREMISM

The truth is that the Seceders never were moderate in any of their stands. At the beginning they were the most zealous for arbitration, and they threatened the Imam with war if he insisted upon the continuation of the war. They considered his continuation of the battle, after he was invited to accept the rule of the Book of God, an unforgivable major sin and a disbelief in Islam.⁵

5. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, pp. 171-173-174.

As soon as the document of arbitration was signed, the Seceders moved from the extreme right to the extreme left. They declared that the acceptance of arbitration and the discontinuation of the battle is an unforgivable sin, or rather a disbelief in Islam.

They went on moving from one extreme to a bigger extreme. They appointed themselves protectors of the faith and the Islamic law which they did not know. They made themselves inquisitive judges, condemning people for their opinions. They put people to death because they disagreed with them. The Declaration of the Faith: "There is no God but the Almighty and Mohammad is His Messenger" (through which the Prophet secured sanctity of the life and property of its pronouncer) was declared by the Seceders to be insufficient. Neither this nor the compliance with all of God's commandments could represent in their views a religious security.

They invented a new law through which they could test the faith of every Muslim, namely: The repudiation of Ali and Othman. Whoever repudiates the two Caliphs, his life would be protected and whoever fails to do so, would be condemned to death. Thus, repudiation of the Imam Ali, the Brother of the Messenger and the "Moula" (guardian) of every believer, became an article of the Islamic Faith in the view of these rebels.⁶

The Imam came back from Siffeen and these extremists also came back, separating themselves from his army. They camped at Harura and to that place they were related afterwards and called: Haruris. The Imam tried to convince them to rejoin his army, and he almost succeeded in reaching that goal. They came back to Kufa, but they were hoping that the Imam will go back to fight Muaweyah without waiting for the result of the arbitration. But the Imam was too righteous to breach a covenant he signed. When they knew of his determination to honor the document of arbitration, they left Kufa after they wrote to those who shared with them their opinion in Bassrah.

6. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, pp. 172-173.

They promised each other to meet at the Land of Nahrawan.⁷ Five hundred from the Bassrites joined them at that place.

The Imam wanted to go back to resume his campaign against Muaweyah after Abu Musa and Amr Ibn Al-Auss ended their mission with disagreement, and their deviation from the right path became obvious. He sent to the Seceders a message calling upon them to rejoin him in his new campaign against Muaweyah, as they used to urge him to do. But now they refused his invitation, accusing him of trying to avenge for himself because the rule of two arbiters did not come in his favor.⁸

The Imam wanted to leave them alone and go back to the battlefield. He called upon the Kufites and the Bassrites to join him in his military campaign. Sixty-two thousand Kufite volunteers responded to his call, along with three thousand and two hundred from Bassrah.

The Seceders in the meantime were waging a campaign of terror unprecedented in the history of the Muslims. They were interrogating people and killing anyone that refused to repudiate the Imam.

They arrested Abdullah Ibn Khabbab Ibn Al-Arath (companion of the Holy Prophet) and his wife. They asked him about Ali before the arbitration and after the arbitration. The man replied, saying: "Ali knows more about God than you do. He is more adherent to the religion and more farsighted than you."⁹

They said: "You follow your selfish desire. You glorify men because of their names and not because of their deeds. By God, we shall kill you in a way with which we never killed anyone before." They handcuffed him and took him with his wife (who was pregnant and about to give birth) to the orchards of Mawaqeerpalm. They slaughtered him and his blood ran into the river. When

7. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 170.

8. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnatul-Kubra*, part 2, p. 104.

Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 171.

9. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, pp. 172-173.

they came to his wife, she asked: Do you not fear God? I am a lady!! They cut her abdomen.¹⁰ They also killed three other women from the tribe of Tay as well as a well-known righteous lady called: Mother of Sinan Al-Saidaweyah.¹¹

The Imam received this disturbing news while he was about to leave for Syria to resume his campaign against Muaweyah. He thought that it would be very dangerous to the people of Kufa and the rest of Iraq if he went on his mission and left these cruel terrorists behind him, doing to the people what they were doing. He found it necessary to try to deal with the new danger before leaving for Syria.

The Imam led his army to Nahrawan where the Seceders were camping. He sent them a message demanding from them to hand him the killers of the Muslims in order to punish the criminals for their crimes. He told them that if they do that, he will leave them and go to face the people of the west, hoping that God may change their hearts and their thinking. The defiant answer was: "We all killed them, and your blood and the blood of your followers are not sacred to us."¹² The Imam came to face them in person and spoke to them, saying:

"You, the band that was driven out of the right road by the hostility of arguments and stubbornness and were prevented from seeing the truth by your blind emotion . . . I warn you not to become in the future objects of curse by this nation, laying at this valley . . . without any authority from your Lord or a clear evidence.

"Do you not know that I prohibited you from accepting the invitation of arbitration and informed you that it was a conspiracy against you? Did I not tell you that the leaders of your enemies are not people of religion and you disobeyed me?

10. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, pp. 172-173.

11. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, pp. 172-173.

Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 5, pp. 81-82.

12. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 173.

Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 5, p. 83.

“When I did what you wanted, I stipulated that the two arbiters shall validate what the Holy Qur’an validates and invalidate what the Holy Qur’an invalidates. They disagreed with each other and disagreed with the rule of the Book and the Holy Prophet. We rejected their decision, and we are now on the original position. How did you come to your position?”¹³

They said; “We have accepted the invitation for arbitration, and when we did that we committed a sin and by this we became unbelievers. And we repented. If you repent, we will be with you and from you, and if you refuse to repent we will be against you and we will fight you.” He said “. . . Do you want me to call myself an unbeliever after I believed in the message of the Holy Prophet, migrated with him and endeavored in the way of God? Should I do what you are asking, I would be of the misguided party.”¹⁴ Then he left them.

The logic of the Seceders is amazing. They say that they committed a sin by the acceptance of the invitation of arbitration, and by this they became unbelievers. Did they mean that whoever commits a sin becomes an unbeliever? If this is what they meant, then a person has to be completely sinless in order to be a Muslim. This means that they believed that all Muslim generations were unbelievers.

PROPHECIES

However, what was recorded in the books of history about the battle of Seceders and what the books of Hadith contained indicate that the Imam was not surprised by what happened to these people. He was expecting the battle and he knew its location, its outcome, and its details

13. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 173.

Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 5, p. 84.

14. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, pp. 173-174.

Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 5, p. 84.

before it happened. He spoke of all that as if he were reading from a book.

The Seceders went towards the bridge of the river while the Imam was praying at a place remote from the river. When some of his companions came to inform him that the Seceders had already crossed the river, he said: "They will never pass the river." As he said that, one of his companions went to verify the word of the Imam. He looked at them from a distance because he was afraid to come close to them. He thought that they had crossed the river. He came back to the Imam verifying the news of their passage. The Imam said: "By God, they will never cross the river, and they will die before coming to the river."¹⁵

People doubted the words of the Imam, and some of them became suspicious. When they went towards the Seceders to verify what he said and found them away from the river, the companions of the Imam exclaimed, saying: "Allahu Akbar" (God is Great). When they informed the Imam of their doubt and what they found, he said: "By God, I never lied, nor has my word ever been disproved."¹⁶

The Imam did not only have the knowledge of the location of the battle, but also he was aware of its minute details. He told his companions before its beginning: "By God, you will not lose ten men from among you, and their balance after the end of the battle will not amount to ten." And the result of the battle came to show the truth of his prophecy.¹⁷

He gave Abu Ayyoub Al-Ansari the banner of safety. Abu Ayyoub called the Seceders, saying: "Whoever comes to stand under this banner would be safe, and whoever did not commit murder and did not attack people and left this place for Kufa or Al-Mada-in, would be safe. Whoever leaves this community would be safe. We do not want to shed your blood. We want to punish the killers of our

15. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, pp. 174.

16. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 174.

17. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 174.

brothers from among you.” Many of them left the camp and about half their number remained determined to fight.¹⁸

The Imam ordered his companions not to start the battle against the Seceders, but they exclaimed: “Let us travel this evening to Paradise.” The Seceders attacked the army of the Imam, and the army of the Imam split itself into two portions, and they put the Seceders between them. The marksmen received them with their arrows. The cavalry from the two sides closed in on them. The foot soldiers came to them with their spears and swords. The Seceders perished in one hour as if God told them: “Die,” and they died.¹⁹

It became obvious to the companions of the Imam that his prophecy was completely true. The army of the Imam did not lose more than eight men, and the balance of the Seceders did not amount to ten.

There was another prophecy which was more important, but the companions of the Imam could not verify it after the end of the battle. The Imam informed his companions before the appearance of the Seceders that a group of Muslims will depart from religion as an arrow departs from its bow. The mark of these people is a man with a defect. When the Imam finished the battle, he ordered his companions to seek that person. They did, but they did not find the man. Some of his companions said: “The man with the defect is certainly not among the dead.” The Imam repeatedly said: “By God, he is among them. By God, I never told a lie, nor has my word ever been disproved.” Finally, he personally went, accompanied by some of his companions, searching for the described man. They found him in a pit on the bank of the river among fifty corpses. When he drew him out, he looked at his arm.

18. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 174.

Sheikh Mohammad Abdo recorded in his *Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 1, p. 107 that only nine of the Seceders survived and only eight of the Imam’s army died.

19. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 175.

He found a lump of flesh like a woman's breast. When that flesh is extended, it extends until it becomes completely parallel to the other hand. If left, it shrinks until it takes its original shape!

When the Imam found what he sought, he exclaimed: "Allahu Akbar," then he said: "By God, I never told a lie; nor was I ever proven to be untrue. Had I not feared that you may neglect your devotional duties, I would have informed you of what God on the tongue of His Prophet said about the people who fight these Seceders while knowing their deviousness and acknowledging the right on which we are standing."²⁰

The historians and the hadith-recorders reported that the Messenger informed his companions about the appearance of these Seceders and that he described them graphically. Al-Bukhari recorded in his Sahih that Abu Sa-eed Al-Khidri said:

"While we were with the Messenger of God, when he was distributing some of the public funds among the Muslims, Thul-Khuwaissirah (a man from Bani Tameem) came to him and said: "Messenger of God, be just. The Prophet said: "Woe to you. If I do not execute justice, who does? I would have failed and lost if I did not execute justice." Omar asked the Messenger to permit him to kill that man. The Messenger said: "Leave him. A group will follow the path of this man. Your prayer and your fast would look too small compared to their prayers and fasts. They read the Holy Qur'an, but the Holy Qur'an does not go beyond their throats. They depart from religion as an arrow departs from a bow. Their mark is a man, one of his two arms looks like a woman's breast or a lump of flesh. The Seceders antagonize the best group of people.

"I bear witness that I have heard this hadith from the Messenger of God as I bear witness that Ali Ibn Abu Talib fought them and I was with him. He ordered his compan-

20. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 175.
Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 5, p. 88.

ions to seek that man, and he was brought out and I saw him exactly as the Holy Prophet described him.”²¹

Muslim in his *Sahih*, reported that Zeid Al-Juhani was in the army of the Imam which fought the Seceders. Ali said: “O people, I have heard the Messenger of God saying: A group of people part with my nation. They read the Holy Qur’an. Your reading compared to their reading is nothing, and so is your prayer and your fast compared to their prayer and fast. They read the Holy Qur’an and think that it is with them, but it is against them. Their prayers do not go beyond their throats. They depart from Islam as an arrow departs from a bow. If the army that fights them knows what came on the tongue of the Messenger for them, they may neglect their duties in reliance on what God promised them of great reward. The mark of this group is a man who has an upper arm only. There is at the end of his upper arm something resembling the end of a breast with some hair coming out of it.

Ali said: “Seek that defective man.” They sought him, but they did not find him. Ali had to seek him by himself until he came to a group of corpses lying one above another. He commanded his men to bring those dead men out. They did and found the man they were seeking down at the bottom. The Imam exclaimed: “Allahu Akbar.” Then he said: “God has fulfilled His Promise, and His Messenger has delivered.”²²

21. Al-Bukhari, his *Sahih*, Book of the Beginning of the Creation.

22. Muslim, his *Sahih*, Book of Al-Zakat.

Martyrdom

When the Seceders were annihilated, one of the companions of the Imam said to him: "Ameer Al-Mumineen, the Seceders have perished completely." The Imam said: "No, by God, they are still sperms in the bodies of men and wombs of women. Whenever a "horn" of them appears, it will be cut off until their last generation becomes thieves and robbers."¹

The Imam was not deceived by his victory against the Seceders. He did not believe that their death meant the death of their doctrines, or that it represented a drastic solution to their problem. He was fully aware that doctrines and principles do not die by the death of their innovators. His combat of the Seceders was nothing but a temporary measure, the purpose of which was to slow their speedy movement and to lighten their growing danger. His combat of the Seceders was only a mission with which the Messenger commissioned him and made clear to him its details, descriptions and marks more than two decades before its time.

The Messenger commissioned the Imam Ali with that mission only because it is a sacred duty which represents the defense of the freedom of belief and the defense of the innocent lives and blood which the Seceders went on shedding for no reason except that their victims did not believe in their falsehood.

1. *Imam Ali, Nahjul-Balaghah* (collection of the Imam Ali's Sermons and Words), part 1, p. 107.

The Imam himself, with all of what the Holy Messenger said about him of being the ally of the truth, did not believe that he should force the Muslims to share with him his opinions or to follow the right road. On the contrary, he used to excuse his opponents and acknowledge their right in the freedom of thinking. He is the one who said: "Kill not the Seceders after me; the one who sought the truth and missed it is not like the one who sought the falsehood and acquired it."²

Had the Seceders believed in their wrong doctrines without attempting to impose it by force on the rest of the Muslims, the Imam would have left them alone, and this was his wish. But they prohibited the Muslims to speak the truth or to believe in it. They forced them to believe in the falsehood and to take it as a religion. They went on killing people because they did not believe in their innovation.

The Battle of Nahrawan succeeded in stopping the speed of the movement and its growing danger against the Muslims. But, as the Imam expected, it did not succeed in eliminating that danger. Nor did it succeed in restoring the determination of the Imam's army to fight the unjust Omayyad party.

The Imam tried after the Battle of Nahrawan to go directly to the land of Syria to face Muaweyah in a decisive battle. But the army and its leaders expressed their desire to camp at Nukhailah near Kufa for a short rest, through which they could regain their strength and renew their weapons and rest their animals of transportation. As they camped at Al-Nukhailah, they started to desert their camp gradually and secretly entering into Kufa as groups and individuals and they never came back. The Imam was finally forced to enter Kufa, urging them day after day to go and face their enemies, but they hated to go and they remained at their homes.³

It is not difficult to know the causes of the failures of these people to perform their duties. The righteous men

2. *Imam Ali, Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 1, p. 108.

3. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnatul-Kubra*, part 2, p. 107.

who were the brains of the revolution such as Ammar Ibn Yasir, Malik Al-Ashtar, Khuzaimah Ibn Thabit (the man of two testimonies), Abdullah Ibn Badeel, and Hashim Al-Mirqal had already died at the battle of Siffeen or outside that battle.

These righteous men were highly enlightened. They were concerned with the future of Islam and ready to sacrifice for the sake of the truth their wealth and their lives. They were the links which used to tie the masses of the people with the Imam and inform them of his right and urge them to obey him and show them by their own action the living examples of obedience and sincerity towards his principles. They were always the first to respond to his call, seeing in him the true representative of the Holy Prophet in word and deed. These righteous people had already met their Lord. They were replaced by people, such as Ashaath, whose hearts were not occupied by faith, or by men such as Hija Ibn Oday and Oday Ibn Hatam, who did not lack faith or sincerity but lacked the wide influence and the power of attracting the masses.

The masses of people who fought with the Imam in three wars had already paid with the blood of their sons and brothers. They became tired of fighting and inclined to an easier and peaceful life without having foresight which makes them concerned with the future and worried about Islam.

The crisis of the Seceders brought about division in the camp of the Imam and destroyed the unity of his followers. The Seceders were annihilated at the Battle of Nahrawan, but their death was not expected to raise the morale of the army which annihilated them. They were the sons, the brothers, and the friends who recently had been the comrades of the soldiers of the Imam and his supporters against his enemy. For a Kufite or a Bassrite, to kill another Kufite or Bassrite was not expected to generate in his mind a feeling of victory. It would rather generate only sadness and a feeling of loss.

The Battle of Nahrawan did not bring an end to the propaganda activity of the Seceders; nor did it bring their

bloody action to a complete stop. They spread their propaganda among people, turning them against the Imam. Whenever a group of them felt strong enough to challenge the Imam's authority, they came out, carrying their swords on their shoulders, spreading panic, horror, and death among innocent people.

Ashras Ibn Ouf Al-Shaibani, along with a group, parted with the Imam. Then he was followed by Hilal Ibn Alqamah, then Ash-hab Ibn Bishr, then Sa-eed Ibn Nufail Al-Taimi.³ After these, Khirreet Ibn Rashid from Bani Najeyah and others followed the same method.⁴ Whenever a group of these people defied the Imam, he was forced to send a regiment or regiments to fight them.

All that destroyed the morale of the Imam's camp and its unity as it destroyed its determination to fight. By this, the military and political initiative moved from the hand of the Imam to the hand of Muaweyah. As Muaweyah knew of the destruction of the unity in the camp of the Imam, he decided to invade Egypt and occupy it, knowing that people of Iraq will not respond to the Imam's call if he calls upon them to send an army for its defense. Muaweyah accomplished what he wanted, and the people of Iraq received the news of the invasion of Egypt, the death of its governor Mohammad Ibn Abu Bakr and the burning of his body as if the matter did not concern them at all.⁵

Success brings success, and failure brings failure. Success made Muaweyah more ambitious. He tried to usurp Bassrah from the Imam, because he knew that the majority of its people were still holding grudges against him for what they lost in the Battle of Bassrah. Muaweyah sent Abdullah Al-Hadrami to Bassrah to try to turn its people against the Imam. He did not succeed in his mission and

4. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 187-188.

Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 183.

5. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, pp. 180-181.

was killed, but only after he generated division among the people of Bassrah.⁶

Muaweyah sent Naaman Ibn Bashir (a companion of the Prophet) with a thousand soldiers, then Sufyan Ibn Ouf with six thousand, then Al-Dhahak Ibn Quais with three thousand to various areas of Iraq for invasions by which they spread destruction and death. Most of the time these invaders went back without meeting from the people of Iraq more than token resistance. Muaweyah sent regiments to Yemen and Hijaz. They did to the Muslims there what non-Muslims would hesitate to do. The invading regiments went back successfully without being hurt.⁷

The Imam used to gather people time after time urging them to defend themselves. Sometimes he spoke to them harshly, but the Iraqis had been weakened and lost their will to fight. One time he spoke to them in the following manner:

“Which country after your country shall you defend and with which Imam after me shall you fight? The deceived one is the one you have deceived. And whoever had you in his party certainly had the losing party. I lost my hope in your help, and I would not believe your words. May God separate between me and you . . .”

“You shall meet after me a general humiliation and an annihilating sword along with a discrimination against you which the unjust ruler will make a rule. He will divide your community . . . and bring poverty to your homes and you will wish soon that you had seen me and helped me. You shall know the truth of what I say. May God put the unrighteous out of His Mercy.”

It would not do any good to blame Muaweyah for corrupting and dividing people and committing incalculable crimes by killing people and destroying their properties, or purchasing their conscience. The Imam knew that Muaweyah and his relatives were and continued to be the enemies of truth and its message. Muaweyah was a seeker

6. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnatul-Kubra*, part 2, pp. 130-131.

7. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, pp. 188-189.

of worldly affairs and a man of falsehood. The Imam did not expect him to do but what he was doing.

Only the followers of the Imam were to be blamed. They were expected to be the means for straightening the crookedness of the nation and re-directing it towards a future in which the light of Islam goes high and spreads throughout the world and leads all nations.

Instead of being the Imam's solution to the problems of the nation, the Kufites became an additional problem to him and to the nation. In one of his addresses, the Imam told them the following words:

“My aim was to medicate the problem of the nation through you, but you have become my main problem. God, the fighters of this disease have gotten tired . . .”⁸

The falsehood certainly acquired victory through the failure of the Kufites, their disobedience, and divisions. The Kufites did not only lose their spiritual values but the value of their worldly life and honorable future on the face of this earth as well. Their enemy, whom they fought violently at the beginning and wanted to strangulate and worked for his annihilation, was not expected to be merciful with them after they cowardly turned their back to him in their retreat.

The Imam told them: “You shall experience after me a comprehensive humiliation, a destructive sword and a constant discrimination against you. Your enemy shall be your ruler. He shall divide you, bereave you and impoverish you.”

These words, which may arouse a coward and awaken a comatose, did not move the Kufites, nor did it succeed in awakening them.

He told them again: “How amazing your attitude is. It paralyzes the heart, puzzles the mind, and defies the human understanding to see the determination of Mua-veyah's party, supporting their falsehood, and your failure to support your right. Thus, you have become a target, constantly being hit and never hitting, and invaded

8. The Imam Ali, *Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 1, p. 234.

but never invading. God is disobeyed, and you are satisfied. If I tell you to invade them in the winter, you say: The weather is too cold! If I tell you to invade them in the summer, you say: This is the heat of the summer; give us respite until the heat ends. If you are afraid of hot and cold weather, you will be more afraid of the sword.

“O you who look like men but never truly are . . . by God, you have ruined my strategies through your disobedience. You have filled my heart with anger.” Thus, the Qureshites said: “Ibn Abu Talib is a brave man, but he does not have the know-how to run a war . . . Who knows about war more than I? Who had experienced war more than I did? By God, I entered war before I was twenty years old. And now I have passed sixty. But a disobeyed man cannot substantiate the wisdom of his opinion.”

With all the setbacks and problems accumulated in his path, the Imam did not lose his determination. His camp caused him to lose the military initiative and imposed upon him an unsuccessful defensive position. Yet, he continued to believe in the possibility of regaining the military initiative and destroying all his enemy's gains by dealing with him decisively. Should the Imam's camp regain its unity, Muaweyah will not benefit from the occupation of Egypt or winning several skirmishes prior to that decisive battle.

Finally, the Imam decided to force those evasive followers of his to take a firm attitude after he despaired of their voluntary co-operation. He tried to put them on the spot and put all of what they had of honor and religion at stake. They either defend all that, or they will have a shame which will never be washed. The Imam wanted to open their eyes to the fact that he has already made a very dangerous decision which he has the power to fulfill because it belongs to his own person. They knew certainly that when he says something, he will do it. He is the hero who was never afraid of any sacrifice regardless of its magnitude. He gathered them and told them the following:

9. The Imam Ali, *Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 1, pp. 69-70.

“O people, you have called upon me by your election to serve, and I did not turn you down. You pledged your allegiance to me, and I did not ask you to do that. Some challengers confronted me, and God took care of them. They fell on the battlefield in humiliation. There is still a community which is disobedient to God, following their selfish interest, deviating from truth. They claim what they are not qualified for. If they are told to advance, they advance, and when they advance, they do not know the truth as they know the falsehood. Nor do they fight the wrong as they fight the right.”

“I have become tired of talking to you and blaming you. I would like you to make your intention clear to me. If you are determined to go to our enemy, this is what I ask and love. If you are reluctant to do that, be frank with me. Let me know your intention, so I will form my opinion.

“By God, if you do not go with me to your enemy in order to fight them until God judges between us and them (and He is the Best of the Judges), I shall pray God to punish you, then I will go to our enemy even if I am not accompanied with more than ten men. Do the riffraff of Damascus and its ignorants have more patience and stronger co-operation for helping the falsehood and assisting the wrong than you have for your truth and right? What happened to you? What is your medicine? Your enemies are like you. If they are killed, they will not be resurrected before the Day of Judgment.”¹⁰

By this important declaration, the Imam put them face to face with their responsibilities. They believed that he was going to fulfill his decision, and he will go to his enemy even if he does not have more than ten persons, and they know that he will find more than ten. They know that if he does that, he will meet his death and they will have a shame which they were not ready to accept. Probably

10. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnatul-Kubra*, part 2, pp. 142-143 (quoting Al-Balathori, in his book: *Ansab Al-Ashraf*).

some of them feared if the Imam prays to God to punish them, God will answer his prayer.

The listeners stood up and spoke well and left him after they showed him that they have decided to help him. They went to their tribes, urging them to fight their enemies. They gained some unity and seemed to be ready to leave, ready to confront their enemy after they prepared manpower and supplies to face the forces of heresy, anarchy and evil in a decisive battle.^{10a}

Was that task force really as healthy as it appeared? Did the hearts of the leaders of the army rally behind the truth? Were Ashaath and others like him cured of the disease of hypocrisy? Would some of the leaders of the newly mobilized army conspire with the enemy to deliberately defeat themselves at the battle for bribes, necessitating the Imam to enter into a desperate battle in which he will meet his death? Did the Imam believe in their sincerity?

History does not give us any clear answer for these questions, because the army did not go through that trial. The Imam met his Lord before the newly mobilized army moved from its camp. History, however, accuses Ashaath who was among the leaders of that army with being an accomplice in the Imam's assassination.

I am inclined to believe that the events which took place before the mobilization of this army had made the Imam lose his confidence in his followers. He told them on one occasion: "By God, I visualize that when the future battle takes place, and the fight progresses, you will leave Ibn Abu Talib alone and run away" . . .¹¹

The Imam was not a man who threw his words vainly. His words always conveyed realities which he used to foresee through the light of God. The Imam would not be deceived by the new mobilization. He knew that the gathering included men who subscribe to the Seceders' opinion, and others believed for their short-sightedness

10a. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnatul-Kubrah*, part 2, p. 143.

11. The Imam Ali, *Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 1, p. 83.

that victory against Muaweyah had become impossible and that the regime of the Imam was coming to its end. People of this kind were always ready to co-operate with the enemies of the Imam. Of course, there were men who were truly sincere, but these people were few, and their presence would not make the Imam reach his goal and prevent the defeatists from bringing his army to a catastrophe.

The trial of the Imam and his tragedy in this nation were great. He was looking at the truth and seeing it clearly in front of him. He knew that the election which he received reluctantly had put on his shoulders the huge responsibility of trying to bring the Muslim World back to the road of righteousness, validating what the Holy Qur'an validates and invalidating what the Holy Qur'an invalidates.

He believed, and he was right in what he believed, that he was the most entitled to be obeyed after the Holy Prophet. He was to him as Aaron to Moses.

On the other hand, he knew the tragic fact: The nation had ignored his right and was divided, while it walked in unity and obedience under the banner of men below him in endeavoring for the religion of God and in knowledge and relation to the Holy Prophet.

Then he looked around and found that a portion of those who went along with him have turned against him, fighting him and offering all of what they had of power to thwart his efforts. The other portion who stayed with him did not give him obedience except untrue promises and cheap excuses.

The enemy who was about to be defeated and whose falsehood was nearing its end until he resorted to hoisting the Qur'an in order to avoid the danger of annihilation became the man of the hour. He became capable of attacking without being attacked and usurping provinces which were under the Imam's authority. The enemy does all that, not because his followers are more numerous or powerful, but because the numerous followers of the Imam had lost their determination and their unity had been destroyed.

The Imam was right when he considered his followers worse to him than his enemies because they were the ones who enabled his enemy by their defeatist attitude to have the upper hand and to become the victorious party. Thus, it was not surprising to see the Imam wishing to part with his followers by death or assassination. On more than one occasion, he asked God to separate him from them, and make him join people better than them, knowing that God will not make him join better than them while he was living on this earth. He knew that this wish would never be realized unless he departed from this world to join his beloved, the Messenger of God, and his party.

It is amazing that he asked God to do that for him when he saw the Messenger of God in his dream shortly before he was assassinated and after the newly mobilized army was formed for the decisive battle. This was evidence that the Imam believed that his new army will not be able to fulfill its mission because a portion of that army does not have good intentions, and that they were with his enemy and not with him.

Ibn Saad in his *Tabaqat*¹², Ibn Abdul Barr in his *Istee-ab*¹³, Ibn Al-Atheer in *Osd Al-Ghab*¹⁴, recorded that Al-Hassan and Al-Hussein reported that Ameer Al-Mumineen (the Imam) told them that he complained to the Messenger of God in his dream, saying to him: "O Messenger of God, the crookedness and hostility which I have experienced from your nation are amazingly terrible. The Messenger said to him: Pray to God to punish them." The Imam prayed, saying: "My Lord, make me join better than these people, and give them a leader worse than I." And the prayer of the Imam was answered.

12. Ibn Saad, *Al-Tabaqat*, part 3, p. 36.

13. Ibn Abd Al-Barr, *Al-Istee-ab*, part 3, p. 1127.

14. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Osd Al-Ghab*, part 4, p. 36, (quoted by Al-Fairouzabadi, *Fadha-il Al-Khamsah*, part 3, p. 56).

THE FULFILLED PROMISE

Had the Imam expected any good out of the newly mobilized army, confident of its reliability and the intention of its leaders, he would not have asked the Almighty to make him join better people by expediting his departure from this world.

There was nothing more desirable to the Imam than to reform what was corrupt of the affairs of the Muslims and to avoid the Muslim World what was threatening it at the hands of the future tyrant rulers in order to illuminate the road to the future generations.

Had the Imam been confident of what had been available of force, he would have found in it his wish and he would have prayed to the Almighty to prolong his life in order to realize his goal.

Evidently, he believed that those who were around him had lost their determination and will for sacrifice. It seems that he felt that a number of the leaders of his army were ready to let him down at the decisive hour and leave him on the battlefield facing thousands of Muaweyah's soldiers, alone to be killed while his army deserted him. They had done what is uglier than that at the war of Siffin when they were in a better situation and a bigger determination.

Had this happened, the life of the Imam would have ended in a battle in which he would be defeated and deserted. But the Almighty wanted for His beloved servant, Ali Ibn Abu Talib, not to taste the bitterness of defeat and humility. He is the sword of God who never was defeated in any battle before. God wanted to move His servant from this world while he is in a dignified state, apparently with a powerful state. Thus, a huge army was gathered at his command before he met his martyrdom, so that he would depart from this world while in power and dignity.

It became clear to the Imam after he went through the most cruel experience, that those who wanted evil for the nation were serious in their work and dedicated for

reaching their ends, while those who used to seek good, justice, prevalence of truth and the heavenly law were weakened and deteriorated. The Imam lost all hope in achieving his goals. Seeing all evidence indicating that falsehood is on the rise and that the truth will meet its death, *the Imam wished that he himself will meet his death before witnessing the death of the truth.*

The Imam longed for a long time to meet his martyrdom. It was his greatest wish in life. He was saddened when he did not receive his martyrdom at the Battle of Ohod. He informed the Prophet of his sadness because he was deprived of martyrdom. The Holy Prophet said to him: "Be cheerful; martyrdom is coming to you."

When the following verse was revealed: "Do people think that they will be left to say that we have believed and they will not be tested? We have tested those who were before them, and God surely knows those who were true and those who were liars," the Imam reminded the Prophet of his prophecy concerning his martyrdom. The Prophet re-affirmed his prophecy, saying: "It shall be so. How shall your patience be?" The Imam replied: "Messenger of God, that is not a place of patience! It is rather a place for cheerfulness and thanks."¹⁵

The Holy Prophet told him once: "The nation will betray you after me. You shall live according to my precept. Whoever loves you loves me, and whoever hates you hates me, and this (pointing to the beard of the Imam) shall be reddened from this (pointing to the head of the Imam)."¹⁶

He told him also, along with Ammar Ibn Yasir: "Shall I inform you of the most wicked among mankind?" Ali and Ammar said: "Yes, Messenger of God." The Prophet said: "The Red of Thamoud who hamstrung the female camel (of the Prophet Saleh) and the one who hits you on

15. The Imam Ali, *Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 2, p. 50.

16. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 142.

this (pointing to the head of Ali) and makes this (pointing to the beard of Ali) moistened by its blood.’’¹⁷

The prophecy was realized on a morning of a day from the month of Ramadan, forty years after the Hijrah. The wickedness, which does not recognize any boundary, motivated a Seceder (called Abdul-Rahman Ibn Muljam, an obscure person from a lowly family) to assassinate the Imam Ali, the brother, minister, and successor of the Prophet Mohammad, while praying to his Lord in a house of God. Yet the assassin testified by his tongue that there is no God but the Almighty, and that Mohammad is the Messenger of God.

A man with a spark of faith in his heart cannot pass this point from the history without shedding a tear on a martyr who obtained from every virtue its highest degree. That is the martyr who offered for the sake of his religion and his nation what no other man, after the Holy Prophet, ever offered of sacrifice. Then the nation for which he offered so much formed an attitude towards him which it may feel ashamed to take towards its worst enemy.

It is difficult for any Muslim that is concerned with the future of the faith of Islam to pass this point of our history without shedding a tear. It is impossible to measure the losses which beset the Muslims and the faith of Islam through the death of this unique leader before he was able to fulfill his goal and his message to a world which was and is still in a great need of that message.

The loss which the Muslims suffered when they missed the Brother and Successor of their Prophet was great and unique in its magnitude. The Muslims never experienced similar to it after the death of the Holy Prophet.

Unequaled Loss

The Muslims who were living at the time of the death of the Imam were unable to measure its magnitude and dimensions and its great consequences. It is worthy to

17. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 141.

mention two important consequences that took place immediately after the death of the Imam:

1. By the death of the Imam, the Muslims lost the clear and pure source of religious information from which they used to obtain the true interpretation of the Holy Qur'an and the authentically reported instructions of the Holy Prophet. The Holy Prophet was the city of knowledge, and Ali was the gate of that city. When the Prophet departed from this world, Ali remained the gate of his knowledge and the treasure of his secrets and the heir of his wisdom. Through him the Muslims were able to hear the voice of the Messenger, informing them of the genuine Islamic rules in the areas of their disputes.

It is true that a number of the Imam's children and grandchildren had acquired his knowledge, and they were capable of providing the Muslims with the interpretation of the Book of God and conveying to them the actual instructions of the Holy Prophet. However, the Muslims who refused to follow the Imam himself with all his acknowledged superiority in knowledge were not expected to follow the Imam's offspring.

The Muslims did not try to acquire from the Imam's knowledge what could spare them the problems of difference and divisions; nor did they give him the time or the true opportunity to provide them with what they needed of knowledge. Therefore, the Muslim World was not expected to enable the Imams from his descendants to realize what the Imam himself could not realize. On the contrary, these Imams from Ali's children and grandchildren were killed and exiled.

Thus, the Muslim World with the lack of clear source of knowledge was forced to adopt various schools in the details of the Islamic Law. Had the Imam been given sufficient time to write and publicize what the Muslim generations needed of knowledge in the Book of God and the instructions of the Holy Prophet, the Muslims would not have adopted various schools of jurisprudence.

The End of the Righteous Caliphate

2. The other immediate consequence which inflicted the Muslims by the death of the Imam was the end of the period of the Righteous Caliphate forever.

Abu Bakr died and Omar was assassinated; then Othman was assassinated, and the righteous caliphate did not end by the death of any of these three Caliphs. But the death of the Imam Ali immediately transferred the Muslim World from a rule led by the Book of God and the precepts of the Holy Prophet, to a despotic rule which did not respect the sacred rights and founded itself on shedding the sacred blood, spreading falsehood, and silencing the voice of truth.

The presence of the Imam was the only barrier between the Omayyads and the establishment of their despotic rule over the provinces of the Muslim World. When he was assassinated, their rule became inevitable.

Had the Muslim World given the Imam the opportunity to erect the pillars of his regime for a sufficient time, the Righteous Caliphate could have lasted generation after generation. The Muslim generations could have lived under the protection of its enlightened, just, and generous rule which the human generations so far could not reach.

The Imam, among the followers of the Messenger, was their most knowledgeable in the Book of God and the teachings of the Holy Prophet. He was the wisest among them, their closest to the Holy Prophet, the most similar to him, and most adherent to the Law of God and the instructions of the Holy Prophet. He was also the highest magistrate in the nation, the greatest endeavorer in the Way of God and the most determined in enforcing the Divine Law.

Yet, the nation, in spite of all of the Imam's magnanimity, did not obey him. Thus, he could not establish the pillars of his regime, nor could he fulfill his goals. People were and are still looking at the outcome regardless of the circumstances which may have led to those results. The absence of these achievements was a source of a continu-

ous controversy around his policy. Most of the students of history believed that the Imam adopted an idealistic policy which could not succeed in a non-ideal society. Had he been less idealistic and more realistic, he could have achieved his goal.

Some scholars blame the Imam for his policy in administering the public funds. He insisted on taking the Muslims back to the days of the Holy Prophet when the public funds were distributed among the Muslims equally. But people at the time he came to power had already been accustomed to the policy of unequal distribution which Omar and Othman had adopted.

Some scholars blame the Imam for his insistence on dismissing Muaweyah. They believe that he could have gained the support of Muaweyah if he did not try to dismiss him. Had he done that, the war of Siffeen would not have taken place, and Muaweyah would not have challenged his authority.

Others blame him for being too lenient with his opponents. He did not punish them when they declared their opposition to him. Some of these critics accuse the Imam of attempting to rule the nation as a preacher rather than a ruler.

Therefore, it would be appropriate to discuss these aspects, then list the true factors which led to the absence of what the Imam endeavored for.

The Imam's Policy Concerning Public Funds

Some of the students of history believed that one of the main factors in the absence of peace during the Imam's reign was his policy concerning the public funds. He tried to treat the leaders and the followers equally in distributing the public funds.

With Talhah and Al-Zubeir.

Had he preferred some distinguished men such as Talhah and Al-Zubeir, the two companions would have remained loyal to him and the war of Bassrah would have been avoided. The cause of war was the disagreement of Al-Zubeir and Talhah with the Imam concerning the distribution of the public funds. The two companions and a number of other companions were accustomed to the policy of unequal distribution which was started by Omar. They thought that the policy of the Imam meant to deprive them of their acquired privileges. Talhah and Al-Zubeir and other preferred companions and children of these companions believed that the Imam would return most of their properties and funds to the Islamic treasury, for a good portion of their wealth was acquired through gifts they received from Othman.¹

1. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnatul-Kubrah*, part 1, p. 77.

With Chiefs of the Arab Tribes

Had the Imam given preference to the chiefs of the tribes and presented them with gifts as Muaweyah did, the Imam would have earned the loyalty of those chiefs, and he would have established the unity of his followers and prevailed against his enemies.

Does Islam Allow Preference?

These critics believed that the Imam could have done all that without breaking the Islamic Law. Such preference actually could have been in agreement with the Holy Qur'an and the precepts of the Holy Prophet. The Holy Qur'an declares clearly that the recipients of the Zakat are eight categories, including the ones who are to be attracted to Islam by generous gifts. The Holy Prophet gave Abu Sufyan, Aqra-a Ibn Habis, and Oyainah Ibn Hissn Al-Fuzari from the spoils of Hawazin much more than he gave righteous Muslims.²

The Three Leaders

The reliable information which we find in history concerning Ayeshah, Talhah, and Al-Zubeir does not support such criticism. It rather contradicts the opinion of these critics. Ayeshah declared her opposition to the Imam as soon as she knew of his election, while she was on her way to Medina coming back from her pilgrimage. She said to the man who informed her of the Imam's election: "I wish that the Heaven falls on the earth if your man (Ali) succeeds in this affair." Then she returned to Mecca, starting her campaign to avenge the blood of Othman before she reached Mecca. She did all that before she knew anything about the Imam's policy concerning the distribution of the public funds.³

2. Ibn Husham, *Al-Seerah Al-Nabaweyah* (Biography of the Prophet), part 2, pp. 493-494

3. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 102.

It is a well known fact in history that Othman preferred Ayeshah, Talhah, and Al-Zubeir in his distribution of money. He granted Al-Zubeir six hundred thousand Dirhams.⁴ He granted Talhah two hundred thousand Dirhams.⁵ But his preference of these two companions did not prevent them from being the leaders of his antagonizers who called for his assassination. Why would they be expected to be in peace with the Imam if he had preferred them in distribution when we know that Ayeshah and Talhah were more resentful to the Imam than they were to Othman? Al-Zubeir was not less than Ayeshah and Talhah in resenting the Imam in his last years after he became obedient to his son Abdullah, the one who carried a great deal of hatred towards the Imam.

Each of the two companions was thinking that the election of the Imam deprived him of reaching the caliphate which he thought to be within his reach.

Ayeshah's Grudge

In addition to her old unfriendly attitude towards the Imam, Ayeshah thought that the leadership of the Imam would be a strong barrier to the return of the caliphate to her clan of Tyme, which was headed by her father the First Caliph. On more than one occasion during the days of Othman, Ayeshah expressed her hope that the caliphate would come back to Tyme through her cousin Talhah.⁶ She used to see in Al-Zubeir a good substitute for Talhah because Al-Zubeir was her brother-in-law, and she used to consider his son Abdullah a son of hers.

The Two Companions' Motives

It is reported that Talhah and Al-Zubeir criticized the Imam's policy in distributing the public funds, and they complained that he equalized them in allotment with those

4. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnatul-Kubrah*, part 2, p. 77.

5. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnatul-Kubrah*, part 2, p. 77.

6. Al-Balathori, *Ansab Al-Ashraf*, part 1 of volume 4, p. 75.

who are below them. But their criticism of the Imam was nothing but propaganda aimed at arousing the preferred class from among the companions against the Imam. They criticized his distribution of the funds equally while they knew that he did that because he wanted to follow the method of the Prophet. They accused him of the blood of Othman while they knew his innocence and that they were the ones who were responsible for Othman's blood. The motive for their criticism was the same as their accusation.

They were hopeful to reach the caliphate. Their ambition was inflamed when Omar made them members of the Electoral Convention. Because of this, they instigated people against Othman and sought his assassination, and for the same reason they criticized the Imam and accused him of the murder of Othman. And for the same motive, they breached their covenant by which they pledged their loyalty to him.

With Chiefs of the Tribes

It is said that the Imam could have secured the loyalty of the chiefs of the Muslim tribes by showering them with gifts and preferring them in distribution. I do not believe that the Imam was religiously able to treat those chiefs as the Prophet treated similar chiefs when trying to attract them to Islam by financial preference.

The chiefs, whom the Imam had to deal with, had adopted Islam a long time before he came to power. They lived under the Islamic law for twenty-five years after the death of the Holy Prophet. Omar discontinued paying the appeased men their share from the Zakat less than ten years after the death of the Holy Prophet.

It should be mentioned, though it does not have much bearing on the subject of discussion, that it is doubted that the Messenger gave Abu Sufyan, Aqra-a Ibn Habis, and Oyaihah Ibn Hissn Al-Fuzari three hundred camels from the Zakat at the Battle of Hunain as the critics mentioned. The share of the appeased men is to come from the Zakat. But the Messenger gave the three chiefs from the spoils of

the battle, and no Zakat is to be paid out of the spoils. The fifth is to be paid out of the spoils. It seems that the Holy Prophet gave the three men from the fifth of the spoils which he had the right to administer its half (which belongs to God and to the Messenger and to the relatives of the Messenger) as he found it in the public interest.

We believe that the Imam Ali had what the Messenger had of the right to administer half of the fifth. But the three Caliphs before him had ignored such a right for the duration of their regimes. I do not think that the Imam could have exercised that right without bringing a problem to himself.

Granted that he had the right and the capability of giving the influential individuals from the shares of the appeased ones, and that he was able to give them out of the half of the fifth without difficulty. Yet it was difficult to secure the loyalty of the chiefs through the shares of the appeased or through half of the fifth. The time of the Imam was not like the time of the Messenger.

Those whom the Prophet tried to attract to Islam through his gifts were few. The recipients of his gifts whose names are recorded in books of history, as far as I could determine, do not amount to a hundred. It was possible to satisfy those people with what was less than the eighth of the Zakat or half of the fifty. The greed of the people did not grow at the time of the Holy Prophet as it grew during the time of the Caliphs. The Holy Prophet gave Abu Sufyan one hundred camels. This was a very huge gift by the measure of the time of the Holy Prophet.

The Islamic State at the time of the Imam became vast, and the number of the Muslims went up to millions. The number of chiefs of tribes went up to hundreds and thousands. For the Imam to open upon himself the door of purchasing people's loyalty with money, it meant that he had to pay hundreds or thousands of chiefs. To give one chief would inflame the appetite of many other chiefs. The price of loyalty went up very high. A gift of one chief sometimes reached one hundred thousand dirhams and

sometimes hundreds of thousands of dirhams (a dirham is equivalent to \$2.00).

We have mentioned in the twenty-first chapter that Khalid Ibn Oseid (from the Omayyads) came to visit Othman while heading a delegation. The Caliph gave him three hundred thousand dirhams. He also gave every member of the delegation one hundred thousand.⁷ This took place while the Third Caliph was ruling the whole Muslim World without any competitors, where he did not need to purchase people's loyalty.

Should the number of the chiefs (who were to be paid for their loyalty) reach one thousand, it would have required about one hundred million dirhams. Had the Imam opened on himself the door of gifts, the eighth of the Zakat and the half of the fifth would not have been sufficient to satisfy the appetites of the chiefs. Nor would the whole fifth be enough. We should not forget that the spoils of the war during the time of the Imam were not very abundant, because the Islamic revenues were decreased during the years of his reign, due to the civil wars.

Furthermore, had the Imam wanted to open the door of gifts on himself, he would have had to compete with Muaweyah for purchasing the loyalty of the chiefs. This meant that he would have had to give most of the public funds for pleasing the chiefs and deprive the masses of the people of their shares in the public funds. This is what the faith of Islam does not allow, nor would Ibn Abu Talib do.

WAS IT POLITICALLY SOUND?

It may be said that the Imam should have done that even if it were not permissible in the faith of Islam under normal circumstances. The Imam had to do that in compliance with the rule of necessity. In other words, the Imam had two alternatives. He had either to observe justice in distributing the public funds, then he would lose the

7. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnatul-Kubrah*, part 1, p. 193.

caliphate and the Muslims would lose the Righteous Caliphate forever, or he would preserve his caliphate and sacrifice justice in distribution of the funds for a few years until he prevails against his opponents and reaches a peaceful time. By this, he could preserve for Islam its future and for the Muslims the Righteous Caliphate for a long time.

These two duties were competing with each other. But securing a good future for Islam is more important than observing justice in distribution. It would be forbidden in Islam to give priority to the important above the more important. Why did the Imam give priority to the important above the more important?

It would be easy for a person, who does not analyze the events of history and its factors, to criticize the policy of the Imam without taking into consideration what the circumstances and the principles of the Imam were dictating at that time. An objective criticism requires more than this superficial thinking. To try to understand the events which filled the period of the caliphate of the Imam, we have to take into consideration the following factors:

1. The Islamic principles, which the Imam was trying to live up to, were expected to limit a great deal of his freedom of action.

2. The hard circumstances which preceded his election had accompanied his reign and continued to escalate the revolution during his era.

In addition to this, we ought to consider the unlimited freedom of action which his opponents enjoyed, due to their lack of principles.

The Imam was elected after an insane revolution which brought the life of the Third Caliph to an end. The source of the revolution was the policy of the Third Caliph in handling the public funds and preferring his relatives and friends, allowing them vast lands and granting them hundreds of thousands and sometimes millions of dirhams from the Islamic treasury. The rebellious groups were seeking through revolution to reform the situation and to bring the nation back to its right road and to prevent the

minority from enriching itself at the expense of the millions of Muslims. These rebels and those who shared their opinion from among the Muslims were the ones who prepared the election of the Imam.

These rebellious ones were in agreement with the Imam concerning justice in the distribution of the public funds. They elected the Imam and pledged their loyalty to him on the condition that they would follow the Book of God and the precepts of the Messenger of God. The Imam would not have accepted their election on any other basis. These were the supporters of the truth and the representatives of the reformatory camp of the Muslim World. Had the Imam reversed his attitude by following a policy of appeasement and purchasing the loyalty of people with public funds, he would not have benefited politically. He would rather have lost the unity of his camp at the beginning of his reign, and his supporters would have stood away from him as they did from Othman.

History records that when the Imam appointed Abdullah Ibn Al-Abbas governor of Bassrah and his brother Obeidullah a governor of Yemen, Malik Al-Ashtar with all his loyalty to the Imam said to him "Why did we kill the old man yesterday?" He meant that the revolution which brought the life of Othman to an end was caused by his policy of preference.⁸ What would be the attitude of Al-Ashtar and others like him if the Imam had tried to purchase the loyalty of the chiefs of the tribes through public funds.

The majority of those who opposed him later from among his followers after the war of Siffeen were not from the people of selfish interests. The Seceders who opposed him after the war of Siffeen were the most remote people from materialism. They were radical immaterialists and excessive in keeping away from all selfish interests. They were enemies of the policy of appeasement and of purchasing loyalty. Their excessiveness is what made them antagonize the Imam and fight him.

8. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnatul-Kubrah*, part 2, p. 53.

Of course there were among the followers of the Imam some hypocrites such as Ashaath. Yet, it is not substantiated that the resentment of these people towards the Imam and their conspiracy with his enemy against him was the result of their materialism.

It is not substantiated that the Imam was able to purchase the loyalty of these people by gifts or bribery. In fact, many were working with the Imam's opponents for no materialistic gain or a position they were seeking or wanted. They were doing that only because their sympathy was with his opponents. Take, for example, Abu Musa Al-Ashari whom the Imam appointed governor of Kufa, the most important province in the Islamic State. He was able to preserve his position for the duration of the Imam's caliphate by co-operating with him. He chose to stand against the Imam and tried to prevent people from supporting him, though he knew that this would put his own position in jeopardy. This shows that he did not oppose him for a material gain, nor for a position. He did that only because he disliked the Imam and liked his opponents.

I think that the attitude and motives of Ashaath and others like him towards the Imam were like the attitude and motives of Abu Musa towards the Imam. However, the Imam was not able to purchase the loyalty of Ashaath and others, even if their loyalty was for sale. It was not possible for the Imam as a man of principle or a flexible statesman to purchase their loyalty. Many companions and sincere followers of Islam would have opposed him, and he would have expedited the hostility of the extremists such as the leaders who became Seceders later for reasons much less than the mismanagement or embezzlement of public funds.

Ashaath by himself would not have been able to bring the war of Siffeen to its end if he did not have the support of extremist readers who later became Seceders. Only through their support, he was able to do damage to the Imam and the Muslim world, though Ashaath and the Seceders had different motives behind the attitude which they shared. The religious fanaticism of these leaders

made them consider the rejection of the invitation to the Holy Qur'an a great sin, and this attitude gave Ashaath the effectiveness which brought the Battle of Siffeen to its saddening end.

Thus, an objective look at the circumstances which preceded the election of the Imam and the foundation on which his election was based and the elements of which his supporters were composed, would prove that the policy which he followed in distributing the public funds was not only righteous but also the wisest course he could take. Thus, the principles for which he lived and endeavored and the circumstances which surrounded him dictated the same policy which he chose.

Had the Imam followed what these critics suggested, he would have lost politically and militarily, and the Islamic history would have lost the only example of the idealism which was embodied in the person of the Imam.

Was the War of Siffeen Inevitable?

“And I am to the Messenger of God like a tree to another tree coming from one trunk, and I am to him like a lower arm to the upper arm. By God, if all the Arabs combine their efforts in combating me, I would not turn my back to them . . . And I shall endeavor to purify the earth from this inverted person until the soil is separated from the grain.”¹

“By God, if I confront them while they are filling the land, I would not be concerned; nor would I feel lonely. I am with assurance from myself and certainty from my Lord, through which I see the falsehoods to which my opponents adhere, and the guidance which I follow. I am expecting to meet my Lord, and hoping for His reward. I am saddened to expect the affairs of this nation to be administered by its wicked foes. They shall distribute the revenue of God among themselves and enslave His servants. They shall oppress the righteous and befriend the transgressors.” (the Imam Ali)²

Had Ali Ibn Abu Talib been a politician whose main concern was to come to power and enjoy authority, unconcerned with what will happen to the future generations, he could have easily gained Muaweyah’s support by

1. The Imam Ali, *Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 3, p. 73.

2. The Imam Ali, *Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 3, p. 120.

keeping him as governor of Syria and promising him to be his successor. This would have relieved the Imam from combating him and would have secured his loyalty and assistance.

Men who are in love with authority are always ready to pay the price, regardless of its magnitude, because authority to them is more valuable than any price they pay. Our Imam was not from these. Authority by itself did not have in his view any value.

Therefore, he was not ready to pay for the authority a price which he considered more valuable than the authority. History witnessed the Imam Ali losing the caliphate when it was offered to him at the conclusion of the Electoral Convention because he refused to pay its price. The price which he refused to pay was not more than one word by which he promises Abdul-Rahman Ibn Ouf to follow the first two Caliphs in matters where he finds no instruction from the Holy Qur'an or the precepts of the Holy Prophet.³ He refused to pay for the caliphate that small price because he believed that he was more knowledgeable in the Islamic Law than the two outstanding companions. He believed also that their precepts were marred by errors which he did not legalize for himself to follow.

As he refused to offer for the leadership a promise to follow the ways of two brilliant companions, he would not be expected to grant Muaweyah, the man of a terrible past, what he seeks in order to enjoy a peaceful leadership.

The Imam was not a conventional politician whose main concern is to come to power. He was rather a unique statesman. Had not Ali Ibn Abu Talib existed, the Islamic ideals after the Messenger would have remained subjective without being embodied completely in a human being.

Security for all Muslim generations against religious deviation was the goal which the Imam was trying to accomplish through leadership. That goal could be summarized as follows:

1. To make justice prevalent in society regardless of

3. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 37.

the religious elements from which it may be composed and retrieving for the nation and individuals what was acquired by the elites through exploitations.

2. To enforce Islamic law so that the adherence to the Islamic principles becomes second nature to the Muslims, individually and collectively.

3. To facilitate understanding of the Holy Qur'an and instructions of the Prophet for the followers of the Faith of Islam.

4. To try to spread Islam throughout the world by making the true Islamic teaching known to all nations.

In other words, the Imam wanted to realize what the Holy Prophet wanted when he tried to dictate a document for his nation that his nation will never stray after it. The political circumstances of the nation had led the nation to deviate from the safe road in the past. Finally the Imam, who represented in the eyes of the Messenger the security for the nation against deviation, has come to power. His duty is to realize that security for the nation and this was within his reach if the nation obeys him. He is the most knowledgeable in the Book of God and the teachings of the Holy Prophet. He was the most concerned person with spreading the teaching of the Faith of Islam and the spirit of adherence to that teaching. He, by the testimony of the Messenger and the outstanding companions, is the most qualified to direct the nation to the right and clear road after the Messenger. He was, after the Prophet, the bravest and firmest person who ever walked on earth.

The Imam believed that retaining Muaweyah within his regime contradicts what he was trying to accomplish. Muaweyah by his nature was opportunist, exploiter, materialistic and unprincipled. With his wiliness and power, Muaweyah was the most dangerous among the opportunists. The Imam was right when he thought that retaining Muaweyah in the rule of Syria will enable him to rule the Muslim world. And this was not all the danger. The bigger danger was the expected continuity of the leadership in the house of Omayyad and rotation of the caliphate in their dynasty.

The Omayyad period proved later that the Imam was right in his thinking. The rule of Muaweyah and the rest of the Omayyads was the antithesis of the Imam's goal. It represented the usurpation of the people's right, their exploitation, shedding the blood of the innocent and the defiance of the Islamic Laws. This resulted with the weakening of the Islamic Spirit in the successive generations.

The war of Siffeen, the assassination of Hijr Ibn Oday and his righteous companions for their refusal to repudiate the religion of Ali, the massacre of Karbala, and the defamation of the Imam on the pulpits of the Muslim World for eighty-three years, were some of the traits of the Omayyad anti-Islam rule.

MUGHEERAH AND IBN ABBAS

History recorded that Mugheerah Ibn Shu-abah Al-Thaqafi came to the Imam after he was elected and advised him to keep Muaweyah in his office at least temporarily. The Imam refused his advice. On the following day Mugheerah came to the Imam, admitting that he was mistaken and advised the Imam to dismiss Muaweyah. Ibn Abbas witnessed Mugheerah coming out of the house of the Imam while he himself was about to enter the house of the Imam. When Ibn Abbas met the Imam, he asked him about Mugheerah's visit. The Imam informed him of Mugheerah's two contradictory opinions. Ibn Abbas commented that Mugheerah was genuine in his first advice, deceptive in his second advice. He affirmed that the wise policy is to keep Muaweyah in his post at least temporarily, and it would be easy for the Imam to dismiss him after he joins his electors. The Imam refused to retain Muaweyah in his post, because he did not want to deviate from his principles which do not permit him to keep Muaweyah in his post for two days.⁴

It appeared to many past and present historians that what Ibn Abbas and Mugheerah counseled the Imam to do

4. IBn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p.101.

was right. Had the Imam accepted their advice, he would not have had to wage the war of Siffeen, and he could have dismissed Muaweyah later, and the reign of the Imam could have been peaceful instead of being filled with civil wars.

Naive Opinion

I believe that those who hold this opinion were not able to estimate the fore-sightedness of the Imam and his awareness of Muaweyah's intention. At the same time, they underestimated the wiliness of Muaweyah and his alertness. Ibn Abbas and Mugheerah both were mistaken.

The Imam had seen through the light of God and his super mental capability, years before he was elected, that the Omayyads will come to power and that they will rotate the leadership among them. He spoke of that during the days of the Electoral Convention before Othman was elected. At that time, he said to his uncle Abbas. "I know that they will elect Othman and if he is assassinated or dies, the children of Omayyad will rotate the caliphate among them; and if I am alive, they will find me where they dislike."⁵

The Progress of the events indicated to the people of wisdom and understanding that the Omayyads were going to come to power. Omar appointed Muaweyah as governor of Damascus, then he widened his authority by adding Jordan to Damascus. He kept him in that post for the duration of his reign. This made Muaweyah so strong that the Caliph, after he was stabbed, warned the members of the Electoral Convention not to dispute with each other; otherwise, Muaweyah may prevail against them and take the leadership away from them. Should such a word reach Muaweyah, it would inflame his ambition towards the caliphate, and make him expect the day when he becomes

5. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 36.

Al-Tabari also reported this in his *History*, part 4, p. 230.

able to snatch the leadership from the hands of the outstanding companions.

Muaweyah's Long Preparation

Muaweyah realized that he could not come to power through a natural course. The caliphate in the eyes of the Muslims was only for the outstanding companions who adopted the faith of Islam at the early stage and offered many sacrifices during the days of the Prophethood when the faith of Islam was at its primary stage of spreading. Muaweyah was not one of those people. As a matter of fact, Muaweyah and Abu Sufyan, the father of Muaweyah, and the majority of the Omayyads except Othman, Abu Huthifa and Khalid Ibn Al-Auss were the front line of the enemies of the Messenger. They were waging against him and his religion war after war, trying to eliminate Islam and its Messenger. They refused to adopt Islam until the Messenger conquered Mecca, and Islam became their only means for saving their lives.⁶

For the Muslims to move the caliphate from the early companions of the Holy Prophet to the enemy of the Prophet, they had to reverse themselves insanely, or the enemies of the Messenger would reach the caliphate by force. Muaweyah was not nearer to the caliphate than his father Abu Sufyan. However, time was not ungenerous to the son of Abu Sufyan with opportunities. Othman came to power and his caliphate revived the hopes of the Omayyads and made them nearer to their dreams. Othman as we mentioned (in chapter 21) through the two sides of his personality represented a potential bridge through which the caliphate may cross from the early righteous companions of the Holy Prophet to the Omayyads, the people of the dark past. Othman was from the early companions. At the same time, he was an Omayyad and he loved his cousins a great deal. His love for them would cause him to move the caliphate to one of his op-

6. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnat Al-Kubrah*, part 2, p. 14.

portunist cousins, and they would use him for reaching their goals.

The wily Abu Sufyan realized that as soon as Othman was elected. He said to the members of the Omayyad clan while they were meeting at the house of the new Caliph: "Make the caliphate alternate among you. By the one in whose name Abu Sufyan swears, there is no Paradise and no Hell . . ."

It is possible that the new Caliph was not present when Abu Sufyan uttered that profane statement, or that the Caliph admonished and chided him, but these words actually expressed the thinking of the Omayyads and what they were trying to reach.

The caliphate of Othman added to the power of Muaweyah a much greater power than he had during the time of the Second Caliph. The area of his rule and influence was greatly widened to include Palestine, Hums, and Qinnisreen.⁷ Thus, he became the governor of what may be called "The Greater Syria." It is true that the authority of Muaweyah was growing during the days of Omar, but it was under strong supervision of the Second Caliph. When Othman took over, the authority of Muaweyah was freed of all supervision and by widening the area of his influence, Muaweyah emerged as the most powerful ruler in the Muslim World. He became stronger than the Caliph. The Caliph began to resort to him in punishing his opponents in Hijaz and Iraq by sending them to Syria and putting them under the supervision of the strong man of the Muslim State.^{8a}

Muaweyah was not the man who neglects opportunities. He was the kind of person who seizes every opportunity and gets out of it the utmost benefits. He started to establish his rule and lay the foundation of his future since the days of Omar. He went on, attracting the chiefs

7. Ibn Abu Al-Hadeed, his *Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah*, vol 2, p. 411.

8. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 57.

8a. Dr. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnat Al-Kubrah*, part 2, pp. 118-119

of the tribes through his generous gifts and mobilizing whomever he was able to mobilize until he possessed the strongest striking force in the Muslim World. One hundred thousand, supported by an equal number from their sons and servants, were paid annually from the Islamic treasury in Syria.⁹

Muaweyah found in Othman his means to the caliphate. He was his cousin and his beloved. It was very likely that Othman would appoint him as his successor if peace continued during the reign of Othman. When the situation changed and the political atmosphere became grim, showing that the signs of violence, evil, and tragedy were creeping near the Caliph, Muaweyah wanted to make out of the difficulties of the Caliph a means which would bring him quickly to his goal.

Muaweyah Refused to Protect Othman

Muaweyah invited Othman when the danger surrounded him to move to Damascus, ostensibly for the purpose of shielding the Caliph against danger.¹⁰ His actual motive was to put the Caliph under his protection. Thus, Othman would keep the name of the caliphate, and Muaweyah would be the actual caliph and at the end Othman will appoint Muaweyah his successor.

The Caliph did not respond to the invitation. Muaweyah, however, was capable of preventing the tragedy from reaching the Caliph by sending an army to Medina in order to defend the Caliph. He did not do that, though the Caliph asked for his military assistance.¹¹ Muaweyah chose to hand his cousin to the knife of the revolution. He refused to assist him militarily.¹² He thought, rightly, that Othman's death would give him a pretext to seek avenge for the blood of the victim Caliph. By this, he would excite

9. Abdul-Fattah Abdul-Maqsoud, *Al-Imam Ali Abu Talib*, part 2, p. 120.

10. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnat Al-Kubrah*, part 2, p. 57.

11. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnat Al-Kubrah*, part 2, p. 59.

12. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnat Al-Kubrah*, part 2, p. 59.

the masses of the people and take them out of their sound thinking and transfer the Muslim World to an insane situation which brings Muaweyah to what he wanted.

Forecast Rule

In addition to the helpful opportunities and the continuous preparations which made Muaweyah close to his goal, he heard many prophecies supporting his thinking and made his wish to reach the caliphate strong and full of life.

Ibn Al-Atheer recorded that while Othman was coming back from pilgrimage, accompanying Muaweyah who was riding a blond mule, a man uttered some poetry indicating that the successor of Othman would be Ali, then Al-Zubeir. But Kaab Al-Ahbar (a Rabbi who adopted Islam) said to the poet: You have lied. The one who will succeed the Caliph is the rider of the blond mule.¹³ Muaweyah became ambitious since that time.

The fact is that his ambition did not start at that time. Muaweyah heard similar to this from the person who was much truer than Kaab Al-Ahbar. I do not believe that Kaab Al-Ahbar found the caliphate of Muaweyah in the Jewish books as he tried to pretend. He actually found that through statements of some companions who heard from the Holy Prophet (one of them was Abu Tharr), who was known for his truth, and to this the Holy Prophet had testified.¹⁴ Abu Othman Al-Jahith in his book *Al-Safyaneyah* recorded that Jallam Ibn Jandal Al-Ghifari attended a dialogue between Muaweyah and Abu Tharr after Othman exiled Abu Tharr to Damascus. Muaweyah said to Abu Tharr: "Enemy of God and enemy of His Messenger, you come every day and do what you are doing. If I were to kill a man from the companions of Mohammad without the permission of the Caliph Othman, I would have killed you."

13. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 73.

14. Al-Termathi, his authentic *Sunan*, part 5, p. 334.

Abu Tharr retorted, saying to Muawayah: "I am not the enemy of God and His Messenger. You and your father are the enemies of God and His Messenger. You showed Islam and concealed disbelief. The Holy Messenger cursed you and prayed to God that you will never be cured of hunger. I heard the Messenger of God, saying: "When the big eyed with the broad throat, the one who eats and never gets full, becomes the ruler of this nation, the nation should be alarmed." Muaweyah said: "I am not that man." Abu Tharr said: "Yes, you are that man. The Messenger of God informed me of that, and I heard him saying while you were passing: God, curse him and make him not feel full except by soil . . ."'¹⁵

Abu Tharr reported in the presence of Othman that the Messenger of God said: "When the children of Abu Al-Auss (the clan of Marwan from the Omayyads) become thirty men, they will distribute the revenue of God among themselves and enslave the servants of God, and interpolate the religion of God."¹⁶

Omar said to Mugheerah Ibn Shu-abah (and this man was one eyed): "By God, the Omayyads will make Islam one eyed as you are one eyed, and they will blind it until Islam is unable to know where to go and where to come."¹⁷ Omar also reported that he heard from the Messenger of God the following: "The children of Omayyad will ascend to my pulpit. I was shown them in my dream jumping on it like monkeys. About them the revelation came 'And We did not make the vision which you have seen but a trial to people and the cursed tree in the Holy Qur'an . . .'"¹⁸

Fakhr Al-Deen Al-Razi, in his commentary on this verse recorded that Sa-eed Ibn Al-Musayab said: "The

15. Ibn Abu Al-Hadeed, his *Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah*, vol. 2, p. 376.

16. Ibn Abu Al-Hadeed, *Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah*, vol. 2, p. 377.

17. Ibn Abu Al-Hadeed, *Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah*, vol. 2, p. 115.

18. Ibn Abu Al-Hadeed, *Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah*, vol. 2, p. 115.

Messenger of God saw in his dream the children of Omayyad jumping on his pulpit like monkeys and that saddened him.” Al-Razi said: “This is the opinion of Ibn Abbas according to the hadith of Ata.”¹⁹ He reported also that Ibn Abbas said that the cursed tree is Banu Omayyad, meaning Al-Hakam Ibn Abu Al-Auss. Ibn Abbas said: “The Messenger of God saw in his dream that the children of Marwan were alternating on his pulpit, and he informed Abu Bakr and Omar of his dream while they were with him at his house. When they left, the Messenger of God heard Al-Hakam speaking of the dream of the Messenger. The Holy Prophet became angry and suspected that Omar betrayed his secret. Then it appeared later that Al-Hakam was spying on them. The Prophet exiled him . . . ”²⁰

Al-Hakim reported that Imam Al-Hassan Ibn Ali said to a man from his companions: “Blame me not (for abdicating the caliphate); may God have His Mercy upon you. The Messenger of God saw in his dream the children of Omayyad speaking on his pulpit one after the other. This saddened him and it was revealed to him in the chapter of Glory:

“We have revealed it (The Qur’an) during the Night of Glory and what did make you know the Night of Glory. The Night of Glory is better than a thousand months (in which the children of Omayyads rule the nation.”²¹

From all this we may understand the meaning of the word of the Imam to his uncle during the days of the Electoral Convention: “I know that they will elect Othman . . . if he is killed or he dies, the children of Omayyad will alternate it among them . . . ”²² No doubt, the Imam heard from the Messenger concerning Othman and the Omayyads

19. Imam Fakhr Al-Razi, his *Detailed Commentary on The Holy Qur’an*, part 5, pp. 413-414.

20. Imam Fakhr Al-Razi, his *Detailed Commentary on The Holy Qur’an*, part 5, pp. 413-414.

21. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 171.

22. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 230.

in general and Muaweyah in particular more than Omar, Abu Tharr and others heard from the Prophet about them.

The Imam said after the Battle of Bassrah when Marwan was brought to him to renew his pledge of allegiance to the Imam: "What shall I do with his pledge? Did he not pledge in Medina? If he pledges his loyalty to me by his hand, he will betray it by his back." When Marwan left, the Imam said: "He will have a rule as short as a dog's licking its nose. He is the father of the four Rams. The nation will have through him and his children a bloody day."²³

Thus, Muaweyah had prepared himself eighteen years for his goal. He seized every opportunity and acquired out of it its utmost benefits and heard what was conveyed to him of the prophecies of the Holy Prophet concerning the Omayyads and concerning him. It was only naive on the part of Ibn Abbas or others to think that keeping Muaweyah in his post temporarily would give the Imam the opportunity to dismiss him easily without a bloody war.

Ali would not have attempted to deceive Muaweyah and if he wanted to do that, he would not have succeeded. Muaweyah was too wily to be dissuaded of his goal. Had the Imam Ali followed the advice of Ibn Abbas and Mugheerah, the Imam would have deceived only himself.

I believe that the two advisors with all their intelligence and wiliness had underestimated the knowledge of the Imam about Muaweyah, and the Imam's wisdom, and his farsightedness, as they underestimated the wiliness of Muaweyah and his determination. Historians who shared Ibn Abbas and Mugheerah's opinion committed the same mistake.

The Imam could have earned peace with Muaweyah by keeping him in his position for the duration of his life and appointing him his successor. But if the Imam had done that, he would have acquired a personal gain at the expense of everything he had stood for. He was fully aware

23. Al-Imam Ali, *Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 1, p. 124.

that Muaweyah could not be trusted with the religion of God and the Islamic nation. The Imam said one time, "I have thought about alternatives concerning Muaweyah. I found only two of them: either to fight him, or to reject what was revealed to Mohammad."²⁴

WAS OMAYAD'S RULE INEVITABLE?

It may be said that if the Holy Prophet had informed his nation that the Omayyads will come to power, why did the Imam fight Muaweyah while he knew that Muaweyah would prevail? What is the benefit of shedding blood if the consequence which the Imam wanted to avoid was the same consequence which God had predetermined for him?

The fact is that the Prophet did not inform Ali or the rest of the companions that the rule of the Omayyads was inevitable and predestined from Heaven and that the will of man has no value in that affair. Actually the opposite is true. The Holy Messenger wanted to inform his nation that its failure to protect Islam against the Omayyads' conspiracy shall bring the Omayyads to power and make them rule the nation. This was a warning from the Messenger to his nation aimed at advising the nation to take the necessary measures to prevent this from happening.

The Holy Prophet prescribed to the nation the measures which shield the nation against this danger and all dangers of deviations.

The prescribed measures were the adherence to the Holy Qur'an and the leadership of the members of the House of the Prophet. He said to the nation that this represents the security against deviation. Had the nation followed the prescription of the Prophet, the Omayyads could not have come to power, and the nation would have been secured against any faith-testing crises.

It was unfortunate that the nation did not heed the Messenger's warnings and did not take the steps which he

24. Al-Imam Ali, *Nahjul-Balaghah*, part 1, p. 94.

prescribed. The nation actually disregarded the second part of the advice completely. It took the opposite road which led the nation into what the Messenger warned against.

The Imam was the only leader who wanted to shield the nation against the danger of the Omayyads. Had Omar done the least in this field, he could have prevented that danger. The Imam Ali was required to wage a bloody war against Muaweyah in order to protect the nation against his danger. The Second Caliph could have shielded the nation against Muaweyah's danger by avoiding his appointment or dismissing him after he appointed him or selecting Ali instead of Othman who came to power through the arrangement of the Electoral Convention. This is what brought the Omayyads to power.

I would like to add that all these events did not constitute a determining factor in preventing the Imam from subduing Muaweyah and reaching a peaceful reign. Even after all these events took place, it was possible for the Imam to rid the nation of Muaweyah and to subdue him or dismiss him. Had "Om Al-Mu'mineen" (Ayeshah) and the two outstanding companions, Talhah and Al-Zubeir, co-operated with the Imam and urged the Muslims to help him instead of revolting against him, Muaweyah would have surrendered to the Imam with humility. Had the three leaders done that instead of starting the fire of rebellion, the rule of the Imam would have been stabilized and the Muslims would have been spared all the civil wars which were inflamed during the first century after the death of the Prophet. Unfortunately, the three leaders took the opposite road and led the nation into what the Messenger warned against.

The Battle of Bassrah made peace with Muaweyah unavailable to the Imam as it made the war with Muaweyah inevitable unless the Imam denies all his principles. The Battle of Bassrah made it clear to Muaweyah that he was not the only one who was opposed to the Imam, and that people outside Syria shared with him his opinion and

legalized war against Ali, and that they did not see it wrong to shed blood for the sake of his opposition.

The Battle itself created to the Imam enemies who were silenced temporarily by his victory, but they were ready to rejoin his enemies as soon as the opportunity permitted. This opportunity came after that, and they rushed into it.

The Battle of Siffeen was truly inevitable. Yet it was not Heavenly predestined because man's will had played a very important role. Had the Iraqi people listened to the Imam and followed him to the end of the road, it would not have been necessary for the nation to surrender to the authority of the Omayyads, and they would have spared the future generations many terrible evils.

Thus, the authority of the Omayyads, in spite of being predicted by the Holy Prophet, was not a Heavenly predestined event. It was only a result of the refusal of the nation to take the right medicine which was prescribed by the Holy Prophet. Certainly the nation continued to refuse it until the end.

I would like to add that the Imam was duty-bound to take the road which he chose even if the Omayyad authority were predestined. The position of the Imam was like the position of many prophets who endeavored in the way of God and died in their endeavor without reaching their aim of making the word of God triumphant. I do not believe that the Prophet Mohammad would have discontinued his endeavor if he had known that he would not win his struggle against his pagan enemies. Had he known that, he would have entered and continued the battle of truth to its end. This is what he declared to his uncle Abu Talib:

“Uncle, by God, if they put the Sun in my right hand and the Moon in my left hand to abandon this mission, I will not abandon it until God makes it triumphant or I perish in it.”

The war which the Imam waged was a preventive measure against the Omayyad danger. It was an imperative duty rested upon his shoulders after he found supporters

for his message and mission ready to sacrifice. Had he not done that, he would have been negligent in discharging the trust, and he would have been an accomplice in the injustice, deviation, and sins of the Omayyads.

Did the Imam Exercise His Rule as a Preacher?

Some of the students of history think that one of the main reasons for the difficulties which the Imam encountered in his caliphate is that he did not exercise his rule as a ruler. He rather exercised his rule as a preacher. He was not firm with his opponents. He allowed them to oppose him, and he was so lenient with them that they felt safe to confront him and disobey him.

Abdullah Ibn Omar and Saad Ibn Abu Waqass and others from the companions in Medina refused to elect him, and he did not force them to change their vote as the Caliphs before him did. None of the three Caliphs allowed any companions to refrain from giving their allegiance to the Caliph. Al-Zubeir was forced to give his allegiance to Abu Bakr, and Abu Bakr and his minister Omar applied a tremendous pressure on Ali himself to give his allegiance to Abu Bakr.

When Al-Zubeir and Talhah left Medina to Mecca pretending that they were going for Omrah (a mini pilgrimage) to visit the House of God, the Imam knew that they were going to join the rebellious group in Mecca.¹ In spite of knowing that, he did not prevent the two companions from leaving Medina. It would have been wise on his part to jail the two companions until the situation became

1. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 491 and p. 444.

clear. Had he done that, he would have spared himself and the Muslims many difficulties and sacrifices.

When he came back to Kufa after the battle of Siffeen, he should have punished Ashaath after he witnessed a great deal of evidence indicating the insincerity of Ashaath and his co-operation with his enemies. He did not do that and surrendered to Ashaath's pressure time after time. He postponed the return to the Battle of Siffeen and entered into the Battle of Nahrawan under Ashaath's pressure.

It would have been wise to keep Ashaath outside the battlefield from the beginning. When the Imam was elected, Ashaath was still in his post in Persia as one of Othman's appointees. When the Imam was about to leave to Siffeen, he dismissed Ashaath from his post. He, according to some reports, required Ashaath to pay some of the funds which he took from the public treasury, then he accompanied him after he reformed him. Had Ashaath been left in his post, the fanatic readers (of the Holy Qur'an) who called for acceptance of the arbitration would not have been able to impose arbitration.

A Winner of Three Wars Is Not Unfirm

It is absurd to say that the Imam did not exercise his rule as a ruler or that he exercised his rule as a preacher and that he did not seriously attempt to keep his authority after he obtained it. It is absurd to say that, when we know that the Imam waged three wars against his opponents and defeated them completely at Bassrah, annihilated his opponents at Nahrawan, and confronted and almost crushed Muaweyah and his army at the biggest battle the history of Islam ever witnessed until that day. A ruler who treated his enemies with such firmness should not be accused of practicing his rule as a preacher.

Why Did He Not Force Some Companions to Elect Him?

It is true that the Imam did not force Ibn Omar, Saad Ibn Abu Waqaas, and a number of companions to pledge their allegiance to him, and allowed them to take a neutral

position. But this is what the Islamic justice demands. It is not permissible for any elective government to force individuals to elect it. Election means authorization by choice. Thus, pledging loyalty by force is the opposite of election. Therefore, Islam declares that allegiance taken by force is forbidden and unbinding. It is one of the natural rights which the faith of Islam sanctifies that every human being has the right to exercise his political freedom, and this is what the most advanced governments in this century sanctify.

When Al-Zubeir was forced to pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr, Ali considered such a coercion contrary to the principle of justice. Individuals and minorities have the right to disagree with the majority, and the majority does not have the right to pressure the minority unless the minority attempts to prevent the majority from exercising its administration. Should a minority try to prevent the majority from administering the affairs of the nation, the majority would be duty-bound to subdue the minority when the election is sound. Saad and Ibn Omar and others did not try to prevent the Imam from exercising his rule as a caliph.

Why Did the Imam Not Prevent Talhah and Al-Zubeir from Leaving Medina?

The Imam did not prevent the two companions from leaving Medina, though he knew that they were going to declare an armed rebellion against him, and he was right in doing that. It was not in the interest of the Imam to be accused of preventing two outstanding companions from offering a devotional visit to the House of God or to jail them for attempting to do that.

Ayeshah was ready to tell that to the Muslim World and to use such an action on the part of the Imam as an additional excuse for revolting against him.

Furthermore, keeping the two companions in Medina would not prevent the Mother of Believers from starting a revolt against the Imam. Ayeshah was ready to start that

revolt with or without the two companions. She started her rebellion as soon as she received the news of the Imam's election and without knowing the attitude of the two companions toward him.² She had a large amount of funds and a good number of men to do that. The Omayyads and their followers were at her disposal and anxious to cooperate with her.³

Why Did He Not Continue the War in Siffeen?

It is not fair to criticize the Imam for the discontinuation of the battle after the copies of the Holy Qur'an were hoisted. Had the majority of his army remained healthy and obedient to him, such a criticism would have been justifiable. He could have been blamed if he had been among those who were deceived by the hoisting of the copies of the Holy Qur'an. But the Imam was the first to tell his army: "Go on with all your determination to fight your enemy." He declared to them that hoisting the Holy Qur'an is only a deception and conspiracy. Muaweyah and his supporters wanted to avoid a crushing defeat. He told them that he knew the leaders of the opposite camp as men and as children, and they were the worst children and the worst men. They were not people of religion or Qur'an.⁴

He told them all that, but they were already deceived and they were unable to see the truth. They defied him and threatened to do to him what they did to Othman or to take him as a captive and deliver him to Muaweyah. When they did that, no voice in the army with which he was surrounded was raised against them. Thus, the Imam was forced to withdraw Al-Ashtar and his division.⁵

Had the Imam continued the war, a battle among elements of his army would have started instead of a battle between them and the enemy. As a matter of fact, that

2. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 459.

3. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 106.

4., 5., 6. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 5, pp. 48-49.

battle was about to start between Al-Ashtar and the people of anti-war movement. He cursed them and they cursed him, and they hit with their rods the face of his horse, and he hit with his rod the faces of their horses, but the Imam stopped their arguments.⁶

Had such a battle started among the elements of the Imam's army, it would have ended with a hastened catastrophe in which thousands of them would have perished. The hostility among the survivors of the expected battle would have been inflamed, leaving no room for reuniting them to fight the enemy again.

Had the Imam insisted on continuing the war and refused to withdraw Al-Ashtar and his division from the battle, all evidence indicated that the fanatics who surrounded the Imam were ready to assassinate him or hand him to Muaweyah. This could have happened without the knowledge of Al-Ashtar and his division. Had the Imam been killed at that time or at a battle that would have started afterwards between the two elements of his companions, the catastrophe would have been much greater than we could imagine.

Why Did He Not Punish Ashaath?

I do not see any logical justification for criticizing the Imam because he accompanied Ashaath to Siffeen or because he did not punish him when his insincerity and collaboration with the enemy became evident. The Imam is a human being. He cannot know the future nor would he be able to foresee that Ashaath would conspire against him if he were in the army. To keep Ashaath away from the battlefield would not prevent the crisis of the arbitration. The Seceders who were the main factor in the crisis were not from the followers of Ashaath. Thousands and thousands of fighters shared with the readers of the Qur'an their opinion, believing that turning down the invitation of the arbitration was a major sin. Ashaath was not the only hypocrite among the followers of the Imam.

The Imam did not punish Ashaath after his insincerity became evident for two reasons:

1. Ashaath was an intelligent hypocrite. He was able to cover up his hypocrisy, showing no evidence that would prove his conspiracy. There was at the time of the Messenger many hypocrites who declared Islam, prayed and fasted, and heard from the Messenger. (There is in the chapters of Al-Ahzab and Bara-ah the clearest evidence on that). The Messenger knew a number of them. He did not punish the ones whom he knew because he did not find evidence that convicts them or because he hoped that they will reform and become good Muslims. Had he punished them, a dispute among his followers might have erupted. Therefore, he preferred to leave them alone for the sake of unity among his companions.

Ashaath was not the only hypocrite in the Imam's camp. Probably there were hundreds and thousands of hypocrites who were feigning loyalty to the Imam and at the same time concealing hostilities towards him. Ziyad Ibn Abeeh, Shibth Ibn Rib-i, and the hundreds from those who fought with the Imam, then participated after that in fighting his son Al-Hussein, represent physical evidence of the existence of a great number of hypocrites in the camp of the Imam.

2. The authority of the Imam after the Battle of Sif-fee'n was shrunk to a great degree. The rebellion of the majority against him after Muaweyah's camp hoisted the copies of the Holy Qur'an represented a military coup which left him authority in name only. Had the Imam tried to punish Ashaath for his opposition to the continuation of the battle, a large portion of the inhabitants of Kufa (who for one reason or another had attitudes similar to that of Ashaath) would have opposed the Imam. Had the Imam punished Ashaath, he would have offended thousands from the tribe of Kindah who used to consider Ashaath their leader. As a matter of fact, Ashaath's punishment was expected to alienate the majority of the Kufites, because they were of the Yemenites, and so was

Ashaath. The Imam, after Siffeen, was not in need of more enemies and difficulties.

WHY DID THE IMAM BIND HIMSELF WITH A DOCUMENT WHICH WAS FORCED UPON HIM?

There are two important questions which demand answers:

1. All evidence indicates that the Imam did not stop the war and sign the document of arbitration willingly. He was forced to do that, and it is known in the religion of Islam that a forced action is nil. A divorce or marriage or election by force would not be sound. And the rule is the same concerning the Pact of Arbitration. This means that the document of arbitration was not binding to the Imam and that he had the right to disregard it. Furthermore, his duty was to cancel it when its cancellation was expected to benefit the camp of truth. Since the Seceders reversed their attitude and tried to return to the battlefield, the Imam should have returned to the war without waiting for the decision of the two arbiters.

As to the validity or invalidity of a pact, I would like to say that a pact signed by a coerced person is nil if the signer signed it as an individual. When the coerced signer is a head of state, and he signs a pact on behalf of Muslims he represents, the pact would not be unsound unless the people whom he represented were coerced to accept the pact. When they are the seeker of the pact, the pact would be binding as soon as it is signed. The pact has to be honored even if a portion of the representees reverse their attitude towards the pact.

It is well known that the majority of the Imam's camp including the Seceders were not coerced to discontinue the fight and accept the arbitration. On the contrary, they were the advocates of both. Repudiation of the pact by the Seceders after it was signed does not relieve the Imam of

his responsibility. Furthermore, reversal of the Seceders' attitude towards the contents of the pact does not necessarily make its breaching in the interest of the Imam or his camp.

The majority of the advocates of the pact continued their attitude, thinking that obeying it is a duty and that they had to wait for the outcome of the arbitration. Had the Imam breached the pact which he signed, he would have faced from the supporters of the document an opposition more violent than that of the Seceders, and his position would have become more difficult than it was before signing the document. For the Imam to go back on a document he signed would only add to the Muslims' confusion. It would have given Muaweyah an argument against the Imam which the Imam would not be able to defeat. The history, which today judges categorically in favor of the Imam, would have hesitated or strayed in its judgment if the Imam had done that.

Why Did the Imam Prolong the Period of Arbitration?

2. The other question which seriously demands an answer is the following:

We believe that the Imam was forced to accept the invitation for discontinuing the war and accepting the arbitration and accepting Abu Musa Al-Ashaari and Ibn Al-Auss as arbiters. We know all that, but what made the Imam prolong the period of arbitration for several months? It was possible for the two arbiters to meet and to issue their judgment within a week or one month. It was possible for the Imam to stay with his army in Siffeen until the two arbiters issued their decision. Had the Imam done that, he would have prevented the development of the dispute and the difference between him and the Seceders who repented for their discontinuation of the war. Had he shortened the period of arbitration, he would have been able to return to the battle while accompanying the Seceders as soon as the two arbiters issued their decision. We

should add to this the fact that the Imam was certain that their verdict would not be in his interest because the two arbiters were hostile to him.

The Seceders asked the Imam: Why did you prolong the period of arbitration? He answered: "We wanted to give the ignorant time so that he may know the facts. We wanted to give the one who knows the facts time so that he may become firmer in his belief. And we hoped that God may rectify the affairs of this nation (then the nation would not need to go back to war)."

Nevertheless, it was possible for the affairs of the nation to be rectified, and the nation would not have needed to go back to war if the two arbiters were expected to validate what the Holy Qur'an validates and to invalidate what the Holy Qur'an invalidates, and if Muaweyah were of those who surrender to the rule of the Holy Qur'an. But Muaweyah fought the Imam knowing that his fight was a fight against the Holy Qur'an and against the prophet to whom the Holy Qur'an was revealed. Yet, one of the two arbiters was as hostile to the Imam as Muaweyah was. The other one (Abu Musa) was very ignorant and unfriendly towards the Imam. Neither of them was expected to say the truth.

Prolonging the time of the armistice could have added to the firmness of the faithful and enlightened the ignorant. For it gave people a longer time to think without being under the pressure of the events and the influence of emotion. But prolonging the armistice would also prolong the arguments among people, escalate differences of the disputing elements in the Imam's camp, relieve the enemy for a longer time and enable him to make a new mobilization for a new battle.

The question seems to assume that the Imam at the time of signing the armistice was aware of the future repentance of the Seceders for the guilt of discontinuation of the war, and that he knew that they will change their attitude and call for the return to the war against Muaweyah. Had the matter been so, the Imam would not have needed to accept the invitation for arbitration, and the

whole event of arbitration would not have taken place. This was not the case. The Seceders were very serious in demanding the cessation of hostility and acceptance of arbitration, and they continued this way until the document was executed. They and others from the bigot readers were the power which forced the Imam to stop the war. They did not change their attitude until the document was signed by the two parties and became a pact in full.

The Seceders were not expected to change their attitude with such speed and move within three days from the extreme left to the extreme right. In the first two days, they believed that continuation of war and rejection of arbitration represented a disbelief in the religion of God. Then they reversed themselves on the third day and believed that discontinuation of war and acceptance of arbitration represented a disbelief in the religion of God. The Imam responded to their first demand which seemed to be the position of the majority of his camp. He executed the document, and he was right in giving them and the rest of the nation a respite that continued a few months with which the matter could become clear to them after they were deceived and confused.

It was logical to expect that the situation would become clear to the Seceders and to others during the months of the armistice, and particularly after the two arbiters issued their unjust and contradictory verdict. The Seceders, however, were not logical, neither at the beginning nor at the end. It was impossible for any human mind to predict their extreme and fast changes of thinking. The Imam was not to be blamed because he could not predict the unseen future.

Suppose the Imam had shortened the period of the armistice for one month and stayed with his army in Siffeen until the two arbiters issued their verdict, then he called upon his army to return to war. Would that have satisfied the Seceders and reunited the Imam's camp?

The subsequent events make us expect the Seceders to refuse to return to war and that their attitude if they had stayed in Siffeen would be similar to the attitude which

they took in Iraq. The Imam actually called upon them to rejoin him in resumption of war after the two arbiters issued their verdicts. They refused to rejoin him, accusing him of wanting to return to the war in order to avenge for himself because the verdict of the two arbiters did not come in his favor.⁷

Had the Imam shortened the time of armistice and remained in Siffeen, then tried to go back to war after the end of the arbitration, the Seceders could have returned to Iraq, waging a campaign of terror, cutting the supplies of his army, and killing whoever disagreed with them. This was what they did after coming back from Siffeen.⁸ No doubt, the danger to the inhabitants of Iraq during his absence would have been greater than it was in his presence.

Thus, prolonging the time of armistice and the return to Iraq was less dangerous than shortening it and staying in Siffeen and returning to war without security forces to protect the innocent civilians of Iraq and the roads of supplies against the Seceders' attacks.

It was only rational on the part of the Imam to expect those who demanded cessation of hostility and the acceptance of arbitration to continue with their opinion and wait until the two arbiters issued their verdicts. Had they done that, the screen of deception would have been removed when the two arbiters strayed from the right road and invalidated what the Holy Qur'an validated. This would have motivated them to renew the war with a stronger determination, clearer sight, and bigger preparation. Had they done that, it would not have been difficult for them while they were under the bravest leadership to defeat Muaweyah and liberate Syria from his rule. Had they done that, they could have secured for themselves, the nation, and its future generations, the brightest future in which justice would be prevalent and the truth would be triumphant.

7. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 171.

8. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 5, pp. 81-82.

All that was possible. But the reversal of the Seceders' attitude and what it generated of arguments and struggles dashed all those hopes and transferred the cessation of hostility into a decisive defeat of the right side and created a catastrophe of great dimensions.

WHY DID THE REIGN OF THE IMAM NOT LAST LONG?

Many historians and writers criticized the policy of the Imam and considered it extremely idealistic and unrealistic. At the same time, these critics appeared to be so impressed with the intelligence of Muaweyah and his wiliness that they considered him a statesman of the highest rank. Critics of this kind usually look at consequences instead of looking at the circumstances which brought about those consequences.

The best way to reach an objective judgement in comparing the two men is to suppose that they had exchanged their circumstances, places, and times, as well as their posts and their qualities except wisdom, intelligence and bravery. Let us suppose:

1. Ali was a non-Hashimite Qureshite, and he was not responsible for the death of many Qureshites at the Islamic defensive battles during the prophethood era.

2. That he was the governor of Syria since the early portion of Omar's caliphate.

3. That he remained in his post for about eighteen years. Thus, the roots of his authority and policy were spread and deepened in Syria.

4. That the people of Syria were the same people at that time in their obedience and unity.

5. That he was an opportunist unconcerned with ideal principles, and that he was concerned only with his selfish materialistic benefits, allowing himself to acquire those benefits through any means including purchasing people's

conscience with public funds, assassination, betrayals, lies, and killing righteous and innocent people.

6. That the Qureshites who represented the influential aristocracy in the Muslim World loved and supported him.

On the other hand, let us also suppose:

1. That Muaweyah was a Hashimite responsible for many Qureshite deaths.

2. That he became caliph after the death of Othman when the unity of the Muslims was broken.

3. That Quraish hated him because he was responsible for the death of many Qureshites.

4. That Ayeshah, Talhah, and Al-Zubeir accused him of the assassination of Othman and turned a great number of Iraqi people against him and waged against him a costly war in which thousands died.

5. That he stayed in Kufa only a short period after that bloody war.

6. That the people of Iraq were the same people at that time in arguments, disputes, extremism, and disobedience.

7. That Muaweyah was a man of principle concerned with the Hereafter as much as with the present life or more, so he would not compromise his principles for his selfish interests. Nor would he allow himself to use any means which are not in accord with the Islamic Law.

Then let us suppose that the two men met at a battle such as the battle of Siffeen and each one had what he had of intelligence, wisdom, and bravery; Ali with his unusual bravery and Muaweyah with his weakness and cowardice. What would be the outcome?

The answer is not difficult. Ali is the triumphant and Muaweyah is the loser politically and militarily.

Even if we delete the 7th condition for Muaweyah and suppose that the two men were equally opportunistic, unbound by any principles, Muaweyah would be the loser politically and militarily. This is because the roots of his authority would not have been spread and deepened in the land of Iraq, due to the shortage of his time in Iraq

and to the fact that the Iraqi people were not united and inclined by their nature towards arguments, dispute, and disobedience.

This would be clear when we remember that Muaweyah was about to meet a crushing defeat at the Battle of Siffeen while he was leading the obedient people of Syria. What would have been the situation if he had had to lead the argumentative and disobedient people of Iraq against the obedient people of Syria?

In fact, we find that Muaweyah, after the Imam was assassinated and after he became the ruler of Iraq, was not able to control Iraq except through the Syrian army. Had he not possessed that populous base along with its obedient army, he would not have been able to continue ruling Iraq in spite of his lack of principles and abundance of opportunities. What would be his fate if he were a man of principle, scrupulous in his religion, and deprived of a firm populous base and an obedient army?

The historical events during the Omayyad period have proven that the ruler of Iraq during that period, regardless of his opportunism and lack of all principles, would not be able to continue ruling Iraq except through a non-Iraqi task force to which he resorts when a crisis erupts. Al-Hajjaj Ibn Yusef Al-Thaqafi with all his harshness, tyranny and extravagance in blood shedding was not able to retain his authority except through the Syrian army. Had he not had the Syrian military recruits, he would have fallen under the blows of the Seceder Shabeeb and his army.

From this, we come to the following conclusion:

For a ruler to be able to retain his authority, he has to possess two important elements:

1. A firm and well-established populous base.
2. An obedient military force capable of supporting him; otherwise, his authority would be unstable.

If we know this, we would be able to put our hands on the factors which contributed to the turbulence which persisted in the Imam's era and hastened its end. The two above mentioned elements: The firm populous base and

the obedient military force were unavailable to the Imam. The sequel of events which took place during the period between the death of the Messenger and the Imam's election made the two elements beyond his reach.

ALI DID NOT HAVE THE TWO ELEMENTS

Ali Ibn Abu Talib was logically expected to be the closest person, after the Messenger, to the hearts of the followers of the Messenger. He is his cousin, his son-in-law, and the one whom he "brothered." He was after the Prophet the most faithful and the most knowledgeable among the Prophet's companions, and the most adherent to the Prophet's teaching. Thus, the Muslims who were the followers of the Messenger were and are expected to be genuinely loyal to Ali, responsive to his call, and obedient to his order more than they were obedient to others. It would have been only natural for Ali to have the two necessary elements for retaining and expanding his authority.

The events of history, however, did not take their logical sequel. They were rather directed through emotional motives, partisan and tribal bigotry, and went on through a road opposite of the logical expectation.

The Jealousy of Quraish

The Qureshites refused while Mohammad was in Mecca to respond to his invitation or to acknowledge his prophethood. They knew Mohammad very well. They knew his trustworthiness and truthfulness. The main factor which made Qureshites take such a negative attitude was their jealousy of Hashim, the clan of the Messenger. They thought that recognition of his prophethood meant recognition of the superiority of the Hashimites above the rest of the Qureshite clans, the rest of the Arab tribes, and the rest of the nations.

The Qureshites refused to acknowledge the prophethood of Mohammad, besieged him and his clan, and

used against him their means of pressure and threat, then plotted to assassinate him. They forced him to leave his hometown to Medina. When their scheme of assassination failed, they resorted to military confrontation. The Messenger, the members of his House, and his companions stood up defending their freedom and sacred principles against the numerous pagan forces, and Qureshite tribes were his main pagan enemy. Motivated by their jealousy, they continued their attempts to annihilate the Messenger and his followers.

Ali Ibn Abu Talib was the right hand of the Prophet in all those battles. He was the leader of the defenders and the most efficient in facing the enemy. His strong defense in the battles of destiny cost the Qureshites many lives.

Thus, the Qureshite clans held him responsible for the blood of their sons, brothers, and relatives. By this, the Qureshites added a new rancor to their glowing jealousy against the Hashimites in general, and inflamed grudges against Ali in particular.

Quraish Retains its Influence and Grudges

Mecca was conquered during the eighth year after the Hijra. Thus, the Qureshites declared their Islam after they lost all hopes of obtaining victory against the Prophet. By this, the bloody struggle of Quraish against the Messenger and his message came to an end. Yet the grudge of the Qureshites against Ali did not come to an end; nor did the influence of Quraish in the Arab society diminish.

The Messenger attempted to secure for the nation a future in which the nation enjoys security against deviation. That security was a combination of two elements: The Holy Qur'an, and a righteous, wise, and thoroughly knowledgeable leadership that walks through the Prophet's path. The Messenger saw that Ali and the rest of the members of his House were the ones who possessed the needed qualifications. Therefore, he declared to the

Muslims that Ali to him is like Aaron to Moses,¹ and that he is the Moula (guardian) of every believer.² He informed them also that he is leaving in them that which if they uphold they will never go astray, the Book of God and the members of his House. He told them that God informed him that the Holy Qur'an and the members of his House will not part with each other until the day of judgment. Beware, he said to the nation, how you treat them after me.³ By this declaration, the Prophet wanted to establish Ali's leadership and to purify the Qureshites' hearts from the pre-Islamic grudges and replace these grudges with the Islamic brotherhood.

Feeling that he was about to depart from this world and that grudges and jealousy may prevent Ali from reaching the leadership of the nation after him, the Prophet wanted to take a precautionary measure against what he feared. He decided to send an army headed by Osamah Ibn Zeid Ibn Harithah to Palestine. There was no immediate danger that motivated the Holy Prophet to send that army. Yet, he urged outstanding companions such as Abu Bakr, Omar, Abu Obeidah, and Saad Ibn Abu Waqaas to be in the expedition. He evidently intended to send the ambitious companions away from Medina so that Ali would take over without difficulty.

The outstanding migrant companions disliked leaving Medina when they knew that the Prophet had fallen ill and had a high fever. The Holy Prophet attempted several times to send them away, saying time after time, "implement the expedition of Osama." But the companions refused to leave and waited.⁴

Unwritten Will

The Prophet witnessed the reluctance of his compan-

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1. Al-Bukhari, his *Sahih*, part 5, p. 24. And Muslim, in his *Sahih*, part 15, p. 176.
 2. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 109.
 3. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 169.
 4. Ibn Saad, *Al-Tabaqat*, part 2, p. 249.

ions to leave Medina. Therefore, he wanted to decide in the matter and leave no excuse for them. Thus, he wanted to dictate while he was in his ailment a document through which his nation will be secured against straying after him. Those who were present in his room from his companions felt that he wanted to record in writing what he declared concerning Ali verbally. Therefore, the influentials among them resisted the will of the Holy Prophet and cast a doubt on his consciousness. They refused to provide him with an inkwell and a sheet for writing, saying: The Book is sufficient for us.⁵

The Alternation of the Caliphate

It seems to us that the migrant Meccan companions were influenced by the psychological attitudes of the Qureshites. They felt that the continuation of the rule in the House of the Prophet after his death will prevent the rest of the Qureshites from reaching the caliphate. These companions felt that Ali's succession to the Prophet would make the Arab society accustomed to the rule of the members of the House of the Prophet. Their relationship to the Prophet had already cast on those members a halo of holiness. Furthermore, their merit was affirmed by what they had of high quality. Thus, it would become impossible for any companions to take the place of these distinguished relatives of the Prophet in the hearts of the Muslims.

Ali, in addition to his close relationship to the Prophet and his special position, had the most brilliant record in the defense of Islam along with a profound knowledge and a righteousness of the highest degree. His two sons, Al-Hassan and Al-Hussein, were declared by the Messenger of God to be the two leaders of the youth of Paradise,⁶ and they would not be so unless they resembled

5. Al-Bukhari, his *Sahih*, part 1, p. 39.

6. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 287.
Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 5, p. 425.

their grandfather and their father. Should the leadership after the Messenger be transferred to Ali, no one from the Qureshites or other people could compete with him for the hearts of the Muslims by offering a relationship to the Prophet equal to his or a record equal to his record. Nor would anybody be able to compete with his two sons by offering a grandfather, a father, or a mother equal to theirs.

Even without considering the prospects of his sons, Ali's succession to the Messenger would be sufficient to prevent the ambitious companions from reaching the leadership because of his youth and their old age. Had Ali succeeded the Prophet and lived after the Messenger only thirty years, none of the caliphs could have reached the caliphate. They would have died before the end of his rule.

The succession of a non-Hashimite Qureshite to the Prophet, therefore, was conceived by ambitious companions to be the only means that makes the caliphate accessible to them. By this, the non-Hashimite Qureshite clans would be able to alternate the caliphate because they are equal to each other. Thus, the honor of the caliphate would compensate those clans for what they missed of the honor of prophethood.

During the days of his caliphate, Omar said to Ibn Abbass: "Quraish disliked to see you having both honors of the prophethood and caliphate, then you would be unfair to your people (The Qureshites). Qureshites have chosen for themselves and they were right and successful."⁷

If there had been nothing of all this, the grudges of Quraish against Ali and the continuation of its influence in the Arab society would have been sufficient to keep Ali away from the caliphate after the Messenger.

The Holy Prophet saw through the light of God what will happen after him. This saddened him, and so he on an occasion embraced Ali and wept. When Ali asked him: Messenger of God, why do you weep? The Holy Prophet

7. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 223, and Ibn Al-Atheer, in his *Kamil*, part 3, p. 34.

said: "Because of the grudges in the hearts of men which they will show you only after me."^{7a}

The Attitude of the Two Caliphs Towards Ali

When the Messenger departed from this world, the Meccan Migrants and the Medinite companions competed for the caliphate but the Migrants had the edge. They won the race. Their argument against the Medinites was that the Messenger of God is from them and that the caliphate is in them. The majority of the companions elected Abu Bakr without mentioning Ali and without consulting him. When Ali refused to join the electors, they attempted to force him to do so, but the daughter of the Messenger stood in their way. Ali did not join the electors of Abu Bakr until the daughter of the Holy Prophet (Fatima) met her Lord. It was only natural for Abu Bakr to find in his heart towards Ali what every human finds towards his only competitor and to find in himself towards Omar what any human can feel towards his dear friend and strong supporter. It was only natural that Abu Bakr rewards Omar by returning the favor and appointing him his successor.

THE GROWTH OF THE QURESHITE INFLUENCE AND THE OBSCURITY OF THE IMAM

The leadership of the first Two Caliphs was expected only to make the non-Hashimite Qureshite influence increase and grow stronger and stronger, and this was expected to put Ali in more isolation.

The Obscurity of the Imam

The period of the Two Caliphs was full of important

7a. Al-Muttaqui Al-Hindi, *Kanzul-Ummal*, Part 6; *Kitab Al-Fadha-Il* (Book of the Virtues), p. 408.

events and many conquests. This kept people occupied. The position of the Two Caliphs went high enough to reach the degree of holiness. The names of the military leaders of the conquests and especially the Qureshites among them became well known. People forgot Ali, his brilliant record in defending the faith of Islam and his great participation in establishing the foundation of the Muslim State, along with what the Messenger of God said about him. People of many nationalities entered into the domain of the faith of Islam. These people knew the names of the Two Caliphs and the military leaders who subdued those nationalities and the rulers who administered their countries. They did not know anything about Ali and his past.

Ali remained in Medina for the duration of the rule of the three caliphs, and he was living in an actual state of isolation from the events and the authority. The Two Caliphs did not appoint him to any post; nor did they appoint any member of his house to any military leadership or civil administration in any part of the Muslim World. Thus, people did not know him. The opportunity was not given to any member of his house to be put in a position that would enable him to inform the Muslims about the members of the House of the Holy Prophet and their leader.

The Muslims during the days of the Two Caliphs knew Saad Ibn Abu Waqaas, the conqueror of Iraq, Amr Ibn Al-Auss, conqueror of Egypt and its governor, and Muaweyah Ibn Abu Sufyan, governor of Damascus. They knew Mugheerah Ibn Shu-abah, governor of Bassrah, Abu Musa Al-Ashaari, its subsequent governor, Ammar Ibn Yasir, governor of Kufa for a short time, and Abdullah Ibn Mas-ood, the treasurer of Kufa. These individuals became better known to the conquered nationalities than Ali Ibn Abu Talib. I do not believe that any of these leaders and rulers, except Ammar Ibn Yasir and (maybe) Abdullah Ibn Mas-ood, was anxious to inform people about Ali and his position in Islam.

I do not say that the Two Caliphs were denying the

position of Ali, and that they did not recognize any of his distinctions. They were too righteous to do that. It is recorded that Omar said: "No one should give a verdict at the Mosque of the Prophet while Ali is present."⁸ He also said more than once: "Had Ali not been present, Omar would have perished (spiritually)."⁹ And Omar said about Ali: "By God, no pillar of Islam could have been erected without the sword of Ali."¹⁰

Yes, Omar used to say that and more than that, but these words used to be said occasionally and never took the form of a general introduction; nor did they pass the walls of Medina. It was easy for the Second Caliph, who had an unlimited influence in the Muslim World, to introduce to the Muslims the Imam Ali. He could have informed them about what he knew of Ali's distinctions and brilliant record in order to prepare the Muslims in general, and the Qureshites in particular, to accept Ali's leadership of the nation after him. But Omar did not do that.

The Omayyads Infiltrated the Regime

This by itself was not to prevent the Imam from reaching a peaceful reign. The growth of the Qureshites in the Islamic society was not in favor of the Hashimites in general and Ali in particular. Yet, it did not represent an insurmountable difficulty to Ali. Had the Omayyads remained outside the Islamic Regime, Ali could have surmounted that difficulty. Unfortunately, the Omayyad clan which was the most hostile to the Prophet with the worst grudge against Ali, had infiltrated Omar's regime and its influence developed rapidly and it became the strongest Qureshite clan among Muslims.

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8. Abdul-Fattah Abdul-Maqsoud, *Al-Imam Ali Ibn Abu Talib*, part 1, p. 226.
 9. Abdul-Fattah Abdul-Maqsoud, *Al-Imam Ali Ibn Abu Talib*, part 1, p. 226.
 10. Ibn Abu Al-Hadeed, his *Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah*, vol. 3, p. 179.

The Continuity of Muaweyah and His Governorship

The Omayyad influence in the Islamic State was born when Omar Ibn Al-Khattab appointed Yazid Ibn Abu Sufyan as the governor of Damascus shortly after it was conquered. Yazid did not live long. The Second Caliph called upon Muaweyah to succeed him. Shortly afterwards, he added Jordan to Muaweyah's authority.¹¹ Muaweyah continued in his post for the duration of Omar's caliphate. Omar did not dismiss him, though he used to dismiss his official appointees and replace them. He dismissed Saad Ibn Abu Waqaas from the governorship of Kufa, in spite of his brilliant past and endeavor.¹² He dismissed Ammar Ibn Yasir, though he wrote to the people of Kufa when he appointed him their governor, informing them that Ammar is from the distinguished men among the companions of Muhammad. But Omar retained Muaweyah in his post.¹³ It seems that the Caliph was impressed by Muaweyah's intelligence, his administrative ability, and he was confident of his obedience to him.

Muaweyah remained in his post until the Second Caliph departed from this world. He retained him in that post though he witnessed his extravagance and his high standard of living. Muaweyah, by his continuation in the governorship of that important province, was able to purchase the loyalty of many chiefs of Arab tribes in Syria. He became powerful enough to make the Second Caliph, shortly before he died, warn the members of the Electoral Convention not to dispute with each other; otherwise, Muaweyah may prevail against them and snatch the caliphate from their hands.

Needless to say, the continuity of the rule of Muaweyah in Damascus and Jordan for that long period was expected to prevent Ali from having any populous base in that province. Muaweyah was expected to close all

11. Taha Hussein, *Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra*, part 1, p. 118.

12. Ibn Saad, *Al-Tabaqat*, part 3, p. 229.

13. Ibn Saad, *Al-Tabaqat*, part 3, pp. 255-256.

channels through which some information may reach the masses of the people of his region about the past of the Imam and his present.

THE ELECTORAL CONVENTION PUT THE CALIPHATE IN THE HANDS OF THE OMAYADS

However, the infiltration of the regime by the Omayyads was not a difficulty insurmountable to Ali if Omar had appointed him his successor.

Had Omar appointed him his successor, Ali would have been able to uproot the Omayyad plantation from the soil of Damascus without much difficulty because that plantation did not reach its ultimate strength during Omar's time.

The Second Caliph, with good intentions, pushed the caliphate in a direction whose immediate consequences were two developments that made the arrival of the Imam to a peaceful rule impossible.

The first of the two developments was the sudden escalation of the Omayyad's power.

When the Second Caliph was stabbed, he refused to appoint Ali as his successor,¹⁴ though he repeatedly declared that Ali was the only one qualified among the companions to make the Muslims walk on the clear and straight road.¹⁵ He refused to appoint him because he did not want to shoulder the responsibility of the caliphate after his death. Thus, he invented the idea of the Electoral Convention. He put the caliphate in the hands of six Qureshite companions; Ali was one of them; the others were: Othman, Abdul-Rahman Ibn Ouf, Al-Zubeir Ibn Awam, Talhah Ibn Obeidullah, and Saad Ibn Abu Waqass. The selected caliph shall be from these alone, and these alone shall select him.

Since the passing Caliph knew that Ali was the most

14. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 228.

15. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 228.

qualified among the six members to lead the nation to the right road, he was expected to tip the scale in his favor by commanding the Muslims to follow Ali's party, if there were two parties among the members of the Electoral Convention. The passing Caliph did what was not expected. He commanded the Muslims to follow the party of Abdul-Rahman Ibn Ouf. Yet, this man was expected to choose Othman who was his brother-in-law, and this is what he did. Thus, the passing Caliph, with good intention, brought the Omayyads to a reality that was beyond their dreams before Omar's era. He indirectly chose for the caliphate Othman, the righteous member of his Omayyad clan. Yet, his righteousness and excessive love of the members of his clan made him a potential bridge through which the caliphate would cross from the early migrant companions to the rest of the Omayyads, the traditional enemy of the Messenger.

Othman's reign insured for Muaweyah the continuity of his rule with a broader authority and fame. The new Caliph added to the area of Muaweyah's authority Palestine and the rest of the Syrian sub-provinces.¹⁶ As Muaweyah became the ruler of that vast and rich area, his rule became free of higher supervisions. As a result, he became the strongest man in the Muslim World. It became possible for him, before the Third Caliph met his Lord, to put at battlefield a respectable army of a hundred thousand fighters. These were salaried by the Islamic treasury in Syria.¹⁷

Muaweyah was not the only Omayyad who ruled an important province and purchased the loyalty of Arab chiefs with what was under his authority of public funds. The Third Caliph appointed another Omayyad, Waleed Ibn Aqaba governor of Kufa, who ruled that city for years.¹⁸ When he was dismissed, he was succeeded by another

16. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 57.

17. Abdul-Fattah Abdul-Maqsoud, *Al-Imam Ali*, part 2, p. 120.

18. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 252.

Omayyad, Sa'eed Ibn Al-Auss.¹⁹ He appointed Abdullah Ibn Amir governor of Bassrah,²⁰ and he also was an Omayyad. He also appointed his foster brother, Abdullah Ibn Saad Ibn Abu Sarh governor of Egypt.²¹ Marwan, cousin of the Caliph and a son of Hakam Ibn Abu Al-Auss, who was exiled by the Holy Prophet, became the strong minister of the Caliph.²² In fact, he became the actual caliph.

Marwan was able through his strong influence to hide from the eyes and ears of this righteous Caliph all evil doings of these appointed officials and convince him of their righteousness and the necessity of their continuation in their offices. Thus, the Muslim World became an Omayyad kingdom ruled by individuals of little religion, along with opportunism and hatred to the members of the House of the Messenger.

The Iron Curtain

These individuals became the orators of the Islamic pulpits and the teachers of the Muslims. One may imagine the iron curtain which these rulers erected to deprive the various nationalities which they ruled of all means of acquaintance with Ali and the rest of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet and their position in Islam. Thus, the communities of Syria were not acquainted in the least with the members of the House of the Holy Prophet. This is what Muaweyah stated during the days of the caliphate of Othman when he said to Ammar: "There are a hundred thousand soldiers and a similar number of their sons and their servants who do not know Ali and his relationship."²³

19. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 279.

20. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 265.

21. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 45.

22. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, pp. 82-83.

23. Abdul-Fattah Abdul-Maqsoud, *Al-Imam Ali Ibn Abu Talib*, part 2, p. 120.

The inhabitants of Bassrah were next to the Syrians in lack of knowledge about the members of the House of the Holy Prophet. These people did not have any ruler during the days of Omar and Othman that was sympathetic to the members of the House of the Prophet. People of Kufa seemed to know little about Ali and his House. Evidently the presence of Ammar Ibn Yasir for a short time and Abdullah Ibn Mas-ood for a longer time had contributed to the acquaintance of the Kufites with the members of the House of the Holy Prophet. But that knowledge remained very limited.

To know the effect of the iron curtain which the Omayyads erected to insulate the provinces which they ruled against any knowledge about Ali's history and that of the members of his house, one needs only to remember the following:

The Muslims who were hostile to the Imam after he was elected were afraid of the presence of Ammar in the camp of the Imam. This was because they heard directly or indirectly that the Messenger said to Ammar, "The aggressor party will kill you."²⁴ But they were not afraid to fight the Imam, though the Messenger said more about him than he said about Ammar and all the companions combined. They did not even remember what the Holy Prophet said about Ali in front of the thousands of Muslims on the day of Ghadeer Khum when he declared that Ali is their Moula, then he said: "God, love whoever loves him, and be hostile to whoever is hostile to him."²⁵ This statement meant that whoever was hostile to Ali was hostile to God, let alone those who fought Ali.

When the Imam wanted to inform people of Kufa about what the Holy Prophet said about him on the day of Ghadeer Khum, he noticed the signs of doubt on the faces of his audience. Therefore, he was forced to ask whoever was present of the companions of the Holy Prophet to

24. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 511.

25. Imam Ahmad, his *Musnad*, part 4, p. 281.

testify to that. Twelve Badrians from among them stood up and attested to his statement.²⁶

Most of the Bassrites during the days of Othman were for Talhah, and Al-Zubeir was popular among the Kufites. This means that the Imam did not have a majority even in Kufa.

People of Egypt seemed to have some knowledge about the Imam before the death of Othman. Evidently this was a result of the presence of Mohammad Ibn Abu Bakr and Mohammad Ibn Abu Hutheifah in Egypt about the end of the period of Othman when they were trying to prepare the public opinion for a revolution against the Caliph. From this, we can see clearly that the Omayyads during the period of Othman had accomplished three of their goals.

1. They were able to block all the informational avenues about Ali in most of the Muslim provinces.

2. They acquired a populous base in Syria and a great influence in the rest of the Muslim provinces through what they bought of loyalty of tribes and influential individuals in every province they ruled. This was the method which they followed wherever they found people ready to sell their religion for material gain, and these were numerous in every province. The public funds were under the authority of these Omayyads, and they were handling those funds according to their whims.

3. What was more important than all that was that the Omayyads were no longer in need of reaching the authority and the caliphate. The caliphate and its authority were now in their hands. Anyone seeking the caliphate would have to use a tremendous military force in order to break their grip on the caliphate. These Omayyads had possessed the manpower and the money which made them able to retain that authority. They were the opportunists of the Arabs who would not hesitate to use any means regardless of its ugliness if it served their purpose.

26. Imam Ahmad, his *Musnad*, part 4, p. 281.

Tribalism

I should not fail to mention the chronical tribal system of the Arab society which rendered to the Omayyads great assistance in developing their power, politically and militarily. At a time when mass media was missing, it would have been difficult for any politician to win popularity of the masses of people. Such popularity could be gained only when the masses of people are tied up with some leaders through blood relationship which makes them follow those leaders blindly. An individual without this kind of leadership becomes independent. He would do what he could to serve his own particular interest, or he follows his logical thinking.

When there are tribal leaderships, the loyalty of the thousands becomes easily acquirable by opportunists such as the Omayyads, especially when the tribal leaders are materialistic-minded. The period during which the Third Caliph ruled increased the number of this kind of leadership because the worldly interests of most of the leaders during that period were put ahead of their religion.

NEW COMPETITORS

The second development which was brought on by the Electoral Convention was the emergence of new rivals who suddenly became powerful enough to compete with Ali for the caliphate. Neither Abdul-Rahman, Talhah, or Al-Zubeir seriously hoped to become caliph.

By granting these companions membership to the Electoral Convention, the Second Caliph promoted them and placed them above the rest of the companions. This inflamed their ambitions and made them feel that they are Ali's equals, and that each of them is qualified to lead the nation.

This superiority complex was stronger in the minds of Talhah and Al-Zubeir than it was in the minds of the two other companions, Abdul-Rahman and Saad. What Tal-

hah and Al-Zubeir acquired of enormous fortunes²⁷ inflamed in them a spirit of competition for the Islamic leadership. Wealth was and is still a power which renders a tremendous assistance for reaching goals. Their membership in the Electoral Convention opened the eyes of Mother of Believers Ayeshah to the possibility of making one of the two companions the next caliph. The caliphate for either of the two companions was highly desirable to Mother of the Believers because Talhah was a member of her clan, Tyme, and Al-Zubeir was her brother-in-law. He was the husband of her sister, Asma.²⁸

Thus, the two companions and Ayeshah had shared one line of thinking. This made them start a vicious smear campaign against Othman which did not end until his death. When the Imam was elected after the death of Othman, the disappointment and the inflammation of ambition motivated the two companions and Ayeshah to oppose the Imam in a violent way which had no precedent in the history of Islam.

The two companions would not have started such a violent campaign if the Second Caliph had not granted them the membership to the Electoral Convention which made each of them feel that he is equal to the Imam.

The Last Opportunity

The Imam, after the death of the Holy Prophet, had constantly showed his serious interest in acquiring the leadership while the Muslims were still merciful to each other and united against the enemies of Islam. The Imam made serious efforts during the days of the Electoral Convention to persuade its members to grant him the leadership. He had foreseen, through the light of God, that the

27. Ibn Saad mentioned in his *Al-Tabaqat*, part 3, p. 110 that Al-Zubeir's fortune amounted to 40 million dirhams, and on p. 222 that Talhah's fortune amounted to 30 million dirhams.

28. See the first vol. of this book, pp. 262-264.

three days of the Electoral Convention were the last opportunity which could enable him to lead the nation to its great goals and destiny, while retaining its unity and internal peace. He was fully aware that if the caliphate was diverted away from him, the unity of the nation will come to an end. One may remember that the Imam said to the rest of the members of the Convention during that period the following:

“Listen to my words and understand my logic. You may see the leadership after this Convention contested so violently that swords will be drawn and covenants will be breached until you are no longer one community. Thus, some of you will be leaders of the camp of deviation and followers of people of ignorance . . . ”²⁹

The members heard his words, but they did not understand his logic. They were the elders of Quraish whose hearts were filled with grudges against Ali. They were doing their best to keep the caliphate away from him. Othman was elected, and the interest of the Imam in the caliphate came to an end. The sequel of the events during the time of the Third Caliph and the revolution which concluded his period had ended the life of the Caliph as it ended the period of unity.

The Caliphate Was Imposed Upon Him

After the death of Othman, the Qureshites lost for a few days the political initiative and control of the political affairs of the nation. Thus, they could not divert the caliphate from Ali this time. The rebels and the majority of the companions of Medina gathered around the Imam, requesting him repeatedly to accept the leadership. He refused it because he was able to foresee that the nation was going to face some insane crisis in which it would be difficult for the masses of the people to see the light and know the right road. Therefore he said to them:

“Leave me out and seek other than me. We are facing

29. Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 37.

a multicolor situation with numerous faces on which the hearts cannot stand and the minds cannot rest.”³⁰

But they asked him in the name of God to accept the leadership. They promised him help and obedience. They put him on the spot as they put him face to face with his responsibility. Thus, he could not resist them. He accepted their election knowing that they placed on his strong shoulders a burden which a mountain could not carry. He is Ali who never fled from duties regardless of their magnitude.

QURESHITE, HOSTILE OR DESERTER?

The Imam was elected and the Qureshite woke up with all their grudges and rancors and with the exception of a few, all their leaders rose in arms against the Imam.

The non-ambitious from the righteous Qureshite leaders took a neutral attitude towards the Imam. They refused to help him and many of them refused to elect him, though they knew his high distinctions and qualifications.

Saad Ibn Abu Waqass, one of the members of the Electoral Convention, refused to assist the Imam or to elect him though he reported that the Messenger of God said to Ali: “Are you not satisfied to be to me like Aaron to Moses, but there shall be no Prophet after me?”³¹ Thus, assistance of Ali and his obedience according to this hadith would be assistance and obedience to the Messenger of God, as the obedience of Aaron and his assistance were obedience and assistance to Moses.

Abdullah Ibn Omar, well known and righteous, refused to assist Ali or to elect him though he reported that the Messenger said: “. . . Whoever dies while he does not

30. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 434, and Ibn Al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil*, part 3, p. 99.

31. Al-Bukhari, his *Sahih*, part 5, p. 24, and Muslim also recorded in his *Sahih*, part 15, p. 176 that Saad Ibn Abu Waqass reported in this Hadith.

owe any allegiance to a caliph, he would die a pre-Islamic death.”³² He afterwards pledged allegiance to Muaweyah because Abdullah feared that he may die a pre-Islamic death if he did not owe Muaweyah an allegiance. For the same reasons, he pledged also his allegiance to Yazid Ibn Muaweyah later. Yet, he refused for five years to pledge his allegiance to the Imam, and he was not afraid to die a pre-Islamic death.

The Qureshite Aggressors

Righteous and wicked leaders from Quraish competed with each other in combating the Imam. They offered sacrifices in combating him more than they offered of sacrifices in combating the pagans.

The Omayyads headed by Muaweyah found in the death of Othman a golden opportunity. The death of Othman was not less beneficial to the Omayyads than his life. It is true that his caliphate gave Muaweyah enough power to make him the strongest man in the Muslim State, but his assassination gave Muaweyah the means to use that power to achieve the goal for which he was preparing himself since his arrival in Damascus.

While Othman was besieged, he asked Muaweyah to relieve him, but he did not relieve him.³³ He did not respond to his call because he wanted him to be assassinated. He sent an army to Hijaz pretending that he was trying to defend him. But he commanded the leader of the army to camp outside Medina and warned him not to enter Medina, regardless of the developments of the crisis until he received his order from Damascus. To deprive the commander of that army from all freedom of action, he told him: “Do not say to yourself that the present sees what the absent cannot see. You are the absent and I am the present.”

Muaweyah had acquired all the benefits that he could acquire from the life of Othman. The death of Othman

32. Muslim, his *Sahih*, part 12, p. 240.

33. Al-Tabari, his *History*, part 4, p. 368.

now had become more beneficial than his life. Defending the Caliph may prolong his life until he dies a natural death. The righteousness of the Caliph may motivate him, if he passes the crisis safely, to appoint an outstanding companion as his successor. Thus, Muaweyah would be deprived of the opportunity as he would be deprived of any justification to impose his leadership on the nation. But a violent death of the Caliph would give him the opportunity and the justification.

From this, we know that the Third Caliph did not possess as much political and military power as Muaweyah. He was unable to defend himself while Muaweyah possessed the power to attack his enemies and to protect the life of the Caliph. This means that Othman was the caliph in name only, and Muaweyah had the real authority.

When the Third Caliph was assassinated, the Omayyads lost the caliphate in name only and for a short period. Muaweyah did not need to acquire the name but to use what he had of power in the way of avenging the death of the assassinated Caliph. He did that and waged against the Imam a war which the Muslims had never witnessed before.

The Righteous Ambitious Qureshites

As the violent death of the Caliph gave Muaweyah a tribal justification to avenge his blood, it added to his power a new power. Talhah, Al-Zubeir, and Mother of the Believers (Ayesah), who were the arch enemies of the assassinated Caliph, joined Muaweyah and became his allies in seeking revenge for the blood which they called on the Muslims to shed. Now they added all their strength to the strength of Muaweyah and preceded him in combating the Imam.

The Battle of Bassrah proved that the three leaders had a tremendous capability. They were able to mobilize against the Imam, at that battle, an army exceeding thirty thousands, while the Imam came from Medina with a few hundred soldiers. He was forced while on his way to Bassrah to stay at Thee Qar for a period of time during

which he made monumental efforts and gathered a task-force which did not exceed twelve thousand volunteers from Kufa. Finally, but not until he entered Bassrah, the Imam's army numbered twenty thousand.

The three leaders with all their righteousness and brilliant past allowed themselves to divide the Muslims and to draw swords against the Imam and put the followers of the Messenger for the first time in the Islamic history in two camps.

The three leaders, along with their army, were defeated, but they opened by their actions a door on the nation which the Imam could not close, in spite of his decisive victory against them. The Islamic division grew after their defeat. The distance between the Imam and the Qureshites increased, and so did their grudge against him after seventy of their leaders were destroyed at the Battle of Bassrah. The people of Bassrah were not to forget the thousands of their sons and brothers who fell in the battlefield.

The people of Kufa were also expected to feel the magnitude of the loss of their sons and brothers in battle.

The death of many of his enlightened supporters in this battle deprived the Imam of a great deal of assistance which they had provided. No doubt, the Battle of Bassrah with its decisive victory against the three leaders did not increase the Imam's power. It rather decreased it by decreasing the number of his supporters.

Those who were in sympathy with his enemies, yet hesitant to combat him, found in the attitude of the two companions and "Mother of the Believers" what encouraged them to join his enemy in combating him. If these three righteous leaders found it legal to fight Ali, why should people with less righteousness hesitate to fight him?

From this, we know that the three leaders offered to Muaweyah and his party great services which added a new power to his growing power.

The three leaders, no doubt, were able to realize the opposite of these results and preserve the unity of the nation, if they had been consistent with themselves and their

past. They were calling for reform and criticizing the Third Caliph for his illegal conducts. They urged people to bring his reign to an end through any means because of the corruption of the relatives of the Third Caliph. As the Imam Ali came to power trying to realize what they were calling for, the three leaders were duty-bound to follow the Imam and assist him in realizing his goals. Muaweyah and his party had malicious intentions towards the nation, and they were trying to usurp the authority from the one who was the most qualified to lead the nation. It was the duty of the three leaders to go to Iraq, Egypt, and the rest of the sources of the Islamic power, and wage an educational campaign informing the nation of the malicious intention of Muaweyah and his party towards the nation.

They could have urged the Muslims to assist the Imam in combating the evil elements. Had they done that, Muaweyah would have realized that what he was aiming for was beyond his reach, and he would have surrendered humbly to the Imam. Had this happened, the nation would have preserved its unity and remained as God wanted it, led by the best leader after the Messenger.

The three leaders should have at least convicted themselves for causing the death of the Third Caliph rather than fighting the Imam, pretending to avenge a blood which they had shed.

The insulin which the membership of the Electoral Convention injected in the veins of the two companions and the chronic hatred of Mother of the Believers towards the Imam coupled with her hope to bring one of her two relatives to the leadership were bound to blind the three leaders. Thus, they waged their vicious campaign which led to the assassination of the Third Caliph and tried to kill the Fourth Caliph in order to reach the caliphate, unconcerned with the future of Islam.

CONCLUSIONS

As we summarize the circumstances and important events which preceded the election of the Imam or ac-

accompanied his reign, we come to the following conclusions:

1. These events and circumstances which deprived the Imam Ali of an established populous base and a sufficient and obedient military force were not of his own making, and he was unable to eliminate them or control them.

It was not within the power of the Imam to purify the hearts of the Qureshites of jealousy towards the Hashimites because of the Prophethood. It was not in the hands of the Imam to avoid the grudges of the Qureshites against him because of what they lost of relatives through his defense of Islam, unless he had avoided the defense of the Messenger and his religion. It was not within his power to change the determination of the Qureshites to alternate the caliphate among them, nor was he able to remove their fear of resting the caliphate in the House of the Prophet if Ali comes to power.

It was not within his power to make the first Two Caliphs look at him as a non-rival; nor was it possible for him to stop the growth of the Qureshite influence during the reign of the two Caliphs.

It was not within the power of the Imam to prevent the Second Caliph from admitting the Omayyads into his regime; nor was it within the power of the Imam to prevent the Second Caliph from keeping Muaweyah in the post which made his power grow.

It was not within the power of Ali to make Omar appoint him as his successor; nor was it possible for the Imam to prevent the Second Caliph from forming the Electoral Convention; nor was the Imam able to prevent Omar from planning the Electoral Convention the way he did and by which Othman won the caliphate and Ali lost it.

It was not possible for the Imam to prevent the Second Caliph from admitting Talhah and Al-Zubeir into the Electoral Convention; nor was it possible for the Imam to gain the love of Ayesha and her loyalty and to prevent her from working to put her two relatives and companions of the Prophet in the leadership.

It was not within the power of the Imam to separate Othman from his opportunist relatives or to prevent him from making them governors of the important provinces of the Muslim State and giving Muaweyah enough power to make him a state within the State.

It was not possible for the Imam to prevent these Omayyad officials from blocking all channels of information about him and preventing the nationalities which they ruled from knowing about Ali's distinctions and high qualifications.

It was not within the power of the Imam to prevent the revolution which destroyed the caliphate of Othman and ended his life. It was not possible for the Imam to prevent Talhah, Al-Zubeir, and Mother of the Believers from pretending to seek avenge for the blood of Othman, in order to usurp the authority from him. It was not possible for him to prevent them from inflaming the war of Bassrah.

It was not possible for the Imam to change the tribal ways of the Arab society or to prevent corruption of the conscience of many chiefs of the tribes and their readiness to sell their religion for their worldly materials.

It was not possible for the Imam to prevent Muaweyah from exploiting the death of the Third Caliph, nor was it possible for him to prevent the Syrian people from obeying Muaweyah.

The Imam was not to be blamed for any of these things; and he was not to be blamed because he did not make the people of Iraq as obedient as the people of Syria. It was not possible for the Imam to change the structure of the Iraqi people who were composed of some righteous individuals and a class of ignorant and extremist readers of the Holy Qur'an and ignorant fanatics, along with tribes who were ready to obey their chiefs, right or wrong.

Muaweyah should not be given credit because of the lack of the Readers class in his society and the rarity of righteous people and the numerous ignorants among the people of Syria during that period.

Remarkable Achievements

2. As we look at the circumstances of the Imam and the difficulties accumulated in his way, before his election and afterwards, we find that he realized the impossible. In order to appreciate that, we need not do more than to remember that he came out of Medina with only a few hundred volunteers to face the three leaders who mobilized more than thirty thousand to combat him at Bassrah.

This took place at a time when Muaweyah had an army that was three times larger than the army of the three leaders with which he was able to threaten any of the provinces which were under the Imam's authority. In the meantime, Abu Musa Al-Ashaari, governor of Kufa, was urging the Kufites to let the Imam down, leading them to what we call now a civil disobedience. The Imam, after all his efforts, was not able to mobilize from the Kufites and others except a limited number of volunteers through whom his army numbered twenty thousand.

With all the difficulties which beset him, the Imam was able to hand the three leaders, along with their huge army, a resounding defeat. He turned to his bigger enemy, and he was able to strangulate him and hand him a military defeat which Muaweyah could not avoid except through the conspiracy of lifting the copies of the Holy Qur'an and the readiness of the volatile Iraqi people to be deceived.

Due to his unusual efficiency, the reign of the Imam continued for 5 years in spite of all the difficulties and limitations imposed on him by his unwavering principles.

Muaweyah's Inefficiency

3. Muaweyah did not excel in using his military power. Had he been at the efficient level which his admirers think he was, he would have used his military superiority at the beginning of the caliphate of the Imam. The three leaders occupied the city of Bassrah and mobilized their forces while the Imam did not have but a few hundred soldiers.

Had Muaweyah been that intelligent and brave as a

leader, he would have exploited the opportunity of military weaknesses of the Imam by sending an army to occupy Kufa when his allies occupied Bassrah. By this, he could have deprived the Imam from the Kufan assistance, and he would have brought the reign of the Imam during that period to an end. As a matter of fact, Muaweyah was able to send a division of his army to Medina and occupy it while the Imam was on his way to Bassrah.

Had the Imam had a situation like that of Muaweyah and Muaweyah was in the position of the Imam (as we tried to hypothesize at the beginning of this chapter), the Imam would have done that and brought the reign of Muaweyah to its end within weeks.

Yet, we find Muaweyah, with all his military potential, lacking the courage and intelligence and staying in Damascus waiting until Talhah and Al-Zubeir and their army fell under the blows of the Imam. Thus, the Imam, afterwards, was able to mobilize a striking force which he led in combating Muaweyah in his own province where he pushed him nearly to the end.

In spite of all the difficulties which accumulated in front of him since the death of the Holy Prophet and multiplied after his election, the Imam appeared as a mountain that was unshakable by all storms that were surrounding him. Had the people of Kufa, alone, gone with him to the end of the road, he could have eliminated the evil forces from the Muslim World and led the nation to a future full of good and illuminated from every side. Had the Imam been obeyed by the Kufites to eliminate the menace of Muaweyah, he could have purified the Muslim society and driven it to the right road. Thus, the faith of Islam could have been spread enough to convert Europe, and subsequently America, whose people had mostly come from Europe.

Unfortunately, people of Kufa experienced what other Muslim communities experienced. They lost their determination, and their power was neutralized. They let the Imam down at the decisive hour, and the whole nation lost its final opportunity.

Responsibility of the Non-Iraqi Muslims

The Iraqis were not the only people who were to blame for what happened. The responsibility was that of the whole nation which refused to assist the truth and took towards the Imam and his right, either a hostile or neutral attitude; and those who were hostile were more numerous than those who were neutral.

The students of history of that Islamic period ought to be amazed by what happened to the Muslims when they lost their mental capabilities and deviated from the right road. The Almighty was disobeyed while righteous people were idly looking on, and some of them went on assisting the devious camp while they were separated from the Messenger by only twenty-five years.

The two groups went on competing in combating the Brother of the Messenger with a fervor which they did not demonstrate even in their combating the pagan forces. The two allied groups pushed the masses of the people to battles in which the nation swam in blood.

The nation and its subsequent generations paid and are still paying the price of the insanity of that generation. The price they paid was the best that Islam had given: justice, freedom, and dignity. The nation brought the reign of the Imam to an end and by that, it ended the Righteous Caliphate forever.

Why Did the Caliphate Not Live Long?

What happened should make us ask: Was the purpose of the faith of Islam to make the Righteous Caliphate last only thirty years? Or was the purpose to provide the nation and its future generations with unity, brotherhood, and justice? Was the purpose to make the faith of Islam a way of life for the Muslims for only three decades? If the purpose was to continue life according to the Heavenly Message for a long time, why did the Righteous Caliphate live so shortly? And why did it have such a fast and sudden death?

The end of life for the true caliphate within such a short time should make us ask the following questions:

Was this sudden death a natural result of the adherence of the Muslims to a program that was planned by the Messenger (because according to a prominent School of Thought, he left it to his companions to elect a successor after him)?

Was the sudden death of the caliphate a natural result of the Muslims' negligence of a program planned by the Messenger who, according to another prominent Islamic School of Thought, chose a successor to lead the nation after him but his companions did not accept the leadership of the Prophet's choice?

Since we have to discuss this, it would be appropriate to raise the two following questions:

1. Should the first succession have been by inheritance, election, or by appointment from the Prophet?

2. If it were supposed to be by appointment from the Prophet, did the Prophet appoint anyone? We shall attempt in the following pages to answer these two important questions.

PART IV

THE CALIPHATE

IN THE

ISLAMIC LAW

Should the First Caliphate Have Been Established by Inheritance, Popular Election, or by the Prophet's Selection?

In order to know the legitimate government from the Islamic point of view, we ought to know the attitude of Islam towards the human freedom and the legitimate way by which freedom could be restricted. We ought to know also the extent of the freedom of the people in electing their governments and the extent of the freedom of the government in legislating rules and regulations. We ought to know also whether the nature of the Islamic principles agrees with the establishment of the government by election or inheritance or appointment.

The faith of Islam respects the freedom of the individual and recognizes it as long as it does not contradict the commandments of God and His prohibitions. As long as man exercises his freedom within the limitations of what God allowed, his freedom is sacred, and no one has the right to deprive him of it. Such freedom is a natural right. To deprive him of it is an encroachment on his natural right. It is injustice and God does not like injustice.

The faith of Islam acknowledges the right of every man and woman in ownership and in managing what they

own. Islam acknowledges that every person has the right to benefit from public properties such as using the roads in land, sea, and air.

As the individual has the right to manage what he owns, he has the right to manage himself and his time. He has the right to move as he wants and to rest as he wants. He has the right to exert himself and to be inactive. He has the right to think and express his opinion. He has the right to elect and authorize whomever he wants in managing his own affairs.

Since these individual freedoms are respected and sacred in the eyes of Islam, no individual has a natural right to rule others because ruling others means restricting their freedom.

It is a function of the government to mobilize armies and security forces, to train those forces, to discipline them, to move them from one place to another, and to use them in the defense and the offense. It is a function of the government to build roads, to expropriate its places, to regulate trade, to limit or to free import and export, and to regulate the internal and external relations.

These regulations interfere in the freedom of the individual and restrict it and deprive the individual of his natural right. No one has the natural right to interfere in the freedom of others anymore than the others have the right to interfere in his freedom. No individual has an exclusive right to use or manage the public property which is owned by a community because people share that right.

Since governing means restricting the freedom of the individuals, the government would not be legitimate in the eyes of Islam (under normal conditions) except through one of two ways:

1. Election by the people, or
2. Selection by God

Islam Has No Room for Hereditary Rule

Rule by inheritance is forbidden in Islam, for the heir of the ruler would be imposed on the people without their

will. His management of external and internal public affairs would be without authorization from the people whom he rules.

Should the rule of the bequeather come through a public authorization by his contemporary generation and should that generation authorize the bequeather to hand the rule to his heir in order to rule the future generation, the rule of his heir would not be legitimate in the eyes of Islam. The future generation has rights equal to those of the contemporary generation. Thus, the contemporary generation has no right to restrict the freedom of its children and grandchildren. The coming generation has the right to abolish what the previous generation decided.

If the coming generation accepts the rule of the heir of the previous ruler, the government of the heir would become legitimate not because the heir has the right to inherit the rule, but because the new generation authorized him to manage their affairs. By this, the government of the new ruler would be a government by election, not by inheritance.

This is the attitude of Islam and the Muslim scholars towards the hereditary rules. One should never think that the Shi-ite Muslim scholars subscribe to the idea of the rule of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet by inheritance. These scholars are the most opposed to the rule by inheritance. They believe that leadership of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet was by a direct or indirect appointment by the Messenger rather than by inheritance from the Messenger.

Yes, the legitimacy of the government in the eyes of Islam under normal circumstances would not take place except through election by people or selection by God.

When people elect a government, their election would be an authorization of the government to represent them. Whatever it legislates or regulations which restrict the freedom of the people would be by their authorization and consent. The government in fact would be the people themselves, because it represents them and fulfills their wish. This means that the individuals who elected their

government are the ones who restricted their own freedom and gave up some of their natural rights by their own will.

As man has the right to restrict his own freedom, the Creator has the right to restrict the freedom of His human creatures because the Creator is the giver of that freedom. Therefore, He has the right to curtail it as He chooses.

Because the Creator has the right to restrict the freedom of His human creatures, He sent Messengers to communicate to His servants His commandments and prohibitions and the rest of His laws. These laws restrict their freedom by commanding them to do what they do not like to do and to avoid many of the things which they do not like to avoid.

As the Creator of the individuals and the communities has the right to restrict their freedom, He has the right to choose for them rulers to enforce the Heavenly law which the Almighty revealed to His Messenger.

If God chooses for His servants a ruler, His choice would be binding on them. They have no right to choose for themselves other than what He chose for them. His choice for them is better than their choice for themselves. When they choose for themselves, they give up some of their freedom by their own consent, but they do not insure for themselves what is good for them. They do not know with certainty the best man to rule them, and they cannot foresee their future or the future of the ruler whom they choose. On the other hand, God foresees their future as He sees their present and past.

The reader may think that the establishment of a government by God's appointment is a mere hypothesis which has no existence. What is available to peoples and nations is only man-made governments, and their best kind is a government through a populous election.

This is true at the present. But the establishment of a government by Divine selection was possible and feasible at the time of the Holy Messenger Mohammad. He himself was a ruler by Divine selection. The evidence of this is that God Himself commanded the believers to obey the Messenger and said: "O you who believe, obey God

and obey the Messenger and the people of authority from among you. If you dispute among yourselves about a matter, return it to God and the Messenger if you believe in God and the Hereafter. That is best and most suitable for a final determination.”¹

The Messenger had the right to establish for the Muslims after him a government he chooses for them. The Holy Qur’an gives him that right:

“The Prophet has more authority over the believers than they have over themselves . . . ”²

As he had this authority over the believers, he had the right to choose for them a government after him. He sees through the Light of God and the Revelation what is better for his nation. If he chooses for his nation a government, his choice would be binding on it. The nation would have no right to choose for itself after he chooses for it. The Holy Qur’an declares:

“And it is not for a believing man or believing woman to choose when God and His Messenger decide a matter. And whoever disobeys God and His Messenger, he clearly deviates from the road.”³

Government by the Prophet’s Appointment

The Prophet’s government was by God’s authorization, and the Holy Prophet had the right to appoint a succeeding government in reliance on God’s revelation. When a succeeding government comes through an appointment by the Prophet, its righteousness and fitness would be secured because he is supported by the Divine Revelation. Thus, he knows what is good for his nation, as he knows the most qualified for leading his nation and spreading the Islamic Message in other nations.

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1. The Holy Qur’an, chapter 4, verse 59.
 2. The Holy Qur’an, chapter 33, verse 6.
 3. The Holy Qur’an, chapter 33, verse 32.

Should this take place, it would be better for the Muslims and more beneficial to them and to their religion than establishing a government after the death of the Holy Prophet by a populous election, even if the electors try their best to choose the best. This is because they do not know who is the most qualified. They may elect a person whom they think to be the best, but he may fail them. Furthermore, masses are often influenced by people of special interest who mislead them.

Elective Government

From this, it would become evident that when the establishment of a government by appointment from the Messenger is not possible, the only means to establish a legitimate government in the eyes of Islam (under normal conditions) is the populous election and nothing else.

Elective Government Is to Abide by the Qur'an

When such a government restricts its electors' freedom through its legislation, it would not be encroaching on their rights because they themselves allowed it to restrict their freedom when they elected it. However, the legitimacy of a government elected by people is not absolute in the eyes of Islam. The Muslims are not allowed to elect transgressors whose actions and policies conflict with the Islamic teachings. The Holy Qur'an declares:

“And rely not on those who are unjust. The fire will touch you and you will have no protector against the punishment of God. Then you will not be helped.”⁴

The Holy Qur'an declares also the following:

“And cooperate in good doing and righteousness. And

4. The Holy Qur'an, chapter 11, verse 113.

do not cooperate in sin and aggression. And obey God. Certainly, God is severe in punishment.”⁵

The election of transgressors and authorizing them to handle the public affairs is a reliance on the unjust individuals who are unjust to themselves or to others, and a cooperation with them in sin and aggression.

In addition, the Holy Qur’an is the constitution of the Muslims and their governments. When an Islamic government’s program and legislations are in disagreement with the constitution, the program and the legislation would be invalid. When such a government is a government of succession to the Prophet, pledging to people to do according to the Book of God and the instructions of the Holy Prophet, then fails to fulfill its pledge, it would lose its legitimacy, and people are not supposed to give it their obedience.

Therefore, it would be necessary for the Muslim electors to do their best to bring to the chair of the caliphate a person whom they believe to be truly righteous. From among the righteous candidates they should choose the most knowledgeable, one who is serious in enforcing the Islamic Law, concerned with the interest of the nation and endowed with capability of leading the nation. To elect a man without these qualifications would be a negligence of the national interest and a betrayal to Islam.

Of course, the electors cannot know with certainty the existence of the necessary qualifications in the one whom they elect. But if they try their best in seeking the man with the qualifications, they would have fulfilled their duty.

This is to be done only if the establishment of a government by appointment of the Holy Prophet is impossible. When that is possible and feasible (and it was so before the Holy Prophet departed from this world), the elected government would be out of place. It would be a function of the Messenger and one of his important duties to choose for his nation a leader after him.

5. The Holy Qur’an, chapter 5, verse 3.

THE NATURE OF THE ISLAMIC PRINCIPLES IS CONSONANT WITH SELECTION MORE THAN WITH ELECTION

Leaving the future of a reformatory message to a populous election puts the message in a serious jeopardy and most of the time it leads to the failure of the message. Reformatory principles, whether Heavenly or earthly, do not accord with the populous desires. Therefore, they are not consonant with populous elections. To illustrate this, we ought to remember that the principles on which the foundation of a government is to be established can be of two kinds:

Popular Principles

1. The first kind are the populous principles which the majority of the people accept because they accord with their desires. Principles of this kind aim at pleasing the majority of the people. These principles would not be imposed on the people by force. They rather follow the opinion of the people, and they can be changed by the people.

All the principles on which the democratic governments are founded are of this kind. These governments come through election by people and the electors are their supervisors.

These kinds of principles are consonant by their nature with populous election. Since the purpose of adopting such principles is to satisfy the desire of the masses, people should try to elect an administration which serves their desires. The duty of such an elected government is to legislate laws and ordinances and issue decisions which accord with the wishes of the electors.

As long as the government does that, it remains legitimate in the eyes of its electors. When its enacted laws and legislations disagree with the desires of the people, they have the right to remove the government out of office. In other words, people are the highest authority when the government is based on popular principles. They have

the right to supervise the government throughout its terms, holding the government accountable for its errors.

Reformatory Principles

2. The second kind is the reformatory principles which usually do not accord with the desires of the people. These kinds of principles aim at reforming people, changing their beliefs, and their ways of life.

The principles which aim at changing the thinking of the people, their habits and ways of life, are usually born in the minds of a person (or persons) who proclaim them and call upon people to adopt them, and usually the majority is opposed to them.

Should the man of such principles and the minority which follows him come to power through a coup or a revolution or any other way and a government headed by the founder of these principles be established, the duty of the founding president and his government is to try to spread and protect them. It would be the duty of the founding head of state to choose as vice-president a person whom he considers to be the most sincere to the principles and the most qualified to lead the nation after him.

Let us remember that even in a democratic country the president chooses (his running-mate) vice-president, and the nation which elects the president believes that he is entitled to choose his own deputy. Of course, a head of state whose government is based upon a revolutionary system and unpopular principles is more entitled to choose his successor.

A government of this kind is a government of minority. It views itself not as a government by the people, but for reforming the people through enforcing principles which are undesirable to them. Therefore, the future of such a government and the future of the succeeding government should not be left to election by the people on whom the reformatory principles were imposed. Such a popular election may bring to power the enemies as well as the friends of these principles. Thus, populous elec-

tion may become a means of destroying the principles on which and for which the revolutionary government was established.

Governments which are based on reformatory principles avoid populous elections because they are aware that their principles are undesirable to the people. If the establishment of the succeeding government is left to the people, the electors will be anxious to elect a government less sincere to the proclaimed reformatory principles.

To illustrate this, let us suppose that a minority believing in the soundness of a system such as that of the American Capitalism comes to power in a Communist country such as the Soviet Union. Such a government of minority would be expected to impose the non-Communitic principles on the people of the Soviet Union after they genuinely adopted the Communistic system. As it succeeds in enforcing the new principles, the government would not be expected to leave the matter of choosing its successor to an election by the people who are expected to elect a government inclined towards Communism rather than Capitalism. The result of such an election would be the destruction of the reformatory principles upon which and for which the revolutionary government was established.

And so would be the case if a Communistic minority comes to power in the United States of America. Such a minority government would not be expected to leave the future of the succeeding government to a populous election. This is because the majority of the American people will choose representatives who believe in Capitalism, rather than Communism.

Furthermore, the founder of such a government would not be expected to leave the selection of his successor (or the vice-president) to a popular election, nor to selection by the members of his party who believed in his principles.

The members of his party, with all their sincerity, may ignorantly choose a person who would be viewed by the founding head of the state to be unqualified for leadership. To choose the unqualified is dangerous to any system. But it would be more dangerous to new reformatory

principles, because the majority of the people do not desire the reform. Choosing an unqualified person would be an assistance to the majority who desire to replace the new system which was imposed upon them. An impotent leader may through his inefficiency bring about deviations or entice the majority through his inaptness to start a counter-revolution. Therefore, the founder of the state would be duty-bound to choose a deputy who would be in his opinion the best of the members of his party.

This means that the reformatory principles are less consonant with the election than any other kind of principles.

Islamic Principles Are Reformatory

There is no doubt that the Heavenly principles in general, and the Islamic principles in particular, are reformatory principles which aim at changing peoples' belief, thinking, and ways of life. People were always inclined to worship idols or to deny the existence of God. The Heavenly religions came attempting to lead them to the worship of the One God. People, by their nature, are inclined to materialism and to try to satisfy their bodily desires excessively, to commit immoralities, to encroach upon the rights of others and to take what does not belong to them.

The history of Prophethood is a history of struggle between the apostles of God and the communities to which they were sent. Every Prophet met difficulties from his own people because he was trying to prevent them from what they like.

Islam in particular stands against varieties of people's desires because of its numerous commandments and regulations. It is sufficient to mention the five daily prayers, the fast of a month in every year during which adults are not allowed (during the day time) to take any food or drink, the prohibition of man and woman to look at each other with coveting eyes or to scandalize, or backbite (a male or female), or to take intoxicants. Above all that is

the stand of Islam against any biased attitude towards relatives and friends.

Islam demands from the Muslims to side with the right side even if he is an enemy, against the wrong side even if he is a brother. These and many others are repugnant to the human nature except the righteous individuals who rise through their faith to what is above their nature.

Thus, a secular revolutionary founder of a state has to choose his successor (the vice president) and not leave his office to the chances of election by his party after his death.

The Prophet is more expected than any founder of state to do that, because his reformatory principles are Heavenly and sacred. Such principles are more entitled to be protected at the present and in the future than any other kind of principles. The Heavenly principles which are proclaimed by such a founder of a State cannot be changed by his companions or the rest of the people or by himself, while reformatory secular principles can be changed by the head of the state or by his party.

The Heavenly principles are hard on people, including those who believe in them, because they stand against human desires. On the other hand, reformatory secular principles, though the majority of the people may resent them at the beginning, in the long run they may be accepted. After all, they are mostly materialistic and morally unrestrictive, unconcerned with man's relationship to his Creator. Thus, the preservation of the Heavenly principles would be emphatically demanding that the Messenger of God chooses his successor by himself.

Leaving the selection of the successor to the chances of election to be held after the death of the Messenger would put the message in danger and push it to an uncertain future. An election may bring the qualified as well as the unqualified leader who lacks the knowledge or firmness or righteousness.

An ignorant or unfirm or permissive leadership is dangerous to the faith of Islam and leads to deviation. A

Heavenly message is a trust in the hands of the Messenger, and the Messenger is too holy to neglect his sacred trust.

The Muslims were fortunate when they chose, after the death of the Messenger, a man such as Abu Bakr who was an outstanding companion whose short period was filled with brilliant events. The Muslims were fortunate to choose such a leader, and he was fortunate when he chose Omar as his successor who made great achievements with which books of history are filled. The arrival of these important leaders to power without being appointed by the Messenger does not mean that the nation was not in need of a successor appointed by him, as many Muslims think. The prevalence of this opinion is due to the fact that the history of these two Caliphs dazzled the eyes of the Muslim thinkers who forgot two important aspects:

1. The period of the reigns of the Two Caliphs was only twelve years. The aim of the message is to make adherence to the Islamic teaching a second nature, and a way of life to the Muslims for generations to come.

2. The Muslims were lucky enough to have two righteous caliphs but this luck did not continue for long. The Muslims, or rather six outstanding companions, had an election after the death of the Second Caliph and that was by a directive from the passing Caliph. The winner of the election was an outstanding companion who was good hearted, righteous, yet he was weak and unfirm. He did not manage the public funds well, and his weakness led to his assassination which brought upon the Muslims wars and crises for centuries, and the Muslims are still suffering the consequences.

The Muslims, afterwards, elected the Imam Ali Ibn Abu Talib, the cousin of the Prophet, the one whom he brothered and the one most resembling him in word and in deed. Had they followed this great Imam, he would have led them on the clear road which the Holy Prophet wanted them to take. Due to many regressive evolutions born during, after, and before the days of the Third Caliph, the Muslims failed to follow this unique Imam, and their loss was great.

Imam Ali was assassinated, and many unrighteous caliphs came after him. Hundreds of them ruled after this Imam, some through semi election and most of them were imposed on the people by force. The overwhelming majority of these caliphs were not from the kind about whom the Almighty said: "Those who if We established them in the land they would establish prayer and pay the poor due and enjoin good and prohibit evil." They were rather bad examples for the Muslims, and people are followers of their leaders except some exceptional ones.

Two Days Out of a Whole Year

Thus, the Muslims for centuries after the period of the four Righteous Caliphs were plagued with crises, civil wars, and untold miseries. If we compare the period of the Two Caliphs with the period during which the Omayyads, Abasside, and Otoman caliphs ruled, it would be like comparing two bright days to a whole dark year. It would not be logical to overlook the darkness of a whole year and remember only the two bright days. This should be sufficient to prove that the nation was in need of leaders chosen directly or indirectly by the Holy Prophet.

The aim of the Islamic message is the continuation of the rule of the Holy Qur'an, along with the instructions of the Holy Prophet and the realization of the goal which the Holy Qur'an declared:

"He (The Almighty) is the One who sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth to make it prevail over all religions, though the Pagans may be averse."⁶

To make the realization of this goal possible, the Messenger was expected to offer to his nation what he could offer of guarantees for the continuity of the message and its diffusion throughout the world for generations to come. The first of the needed guarantees is to choose the best qualified person to take his place when he is absent and succeed him after his death.

6. The Holy Qur'an, chapter 9, verse 33.

When such a successor comes to power, he would be expected to do as the Holy Prophet did. He chooses his own successor and that would be expected to be well qualified for leadership. This is because the first successor who was the Prophet's appointee is holy enough to have higher perception than other people. The successor, in his turn, is expected to follow the same road, and to continue until the Qur'anic goal is realized and the adherence to the Islamic teaching becomes a second nature to the Muslims regardless of differences of language, nationality, and race.

THE DANGERS WHICH WERE ABOUT TO FACE THE NATION

The second reason which invites us to believe that choosing a leader for the nation after the death of the Messenger was of the prime functions of the Messenger is that the Messenger was aware of what the Nation was about to face of crises. The first of those crises appeared during the life of the Holy Prophet. Musailimah, the Liar, and Al-Aswad Al-Anasi appeared while the Prophet was still alive. They claimed prophethood and they found followers and their dangers were growing. The Holy Messenger expressed his expectations of many faith-testing crises that will come after his death.

Al-Hakim in his *Al-Mustadrak*,^{6a} Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad*,⁷ Ibn Husham in his *Al-Seerat*,⁸ and Ibn Saad in his *Al-Tabaqat*,⁹ recorded that Abu Muwaihbihah, servant of the Messenger, said the following:

“The Messenger told me (at a night before his last ailment): ‘Abu Muwaihbihah, I have been commanded to pray to God to forgive the Muslims who are buried at the cemetery of Al-Baqee-a. Come with me.’ I went with him.

6a. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 53.

7. Imam Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*, part 3, p. 489

8. Ibn Husham, *Al-Seerat Al-Nabaweyah*, part 2, p. 642.

9. Ibn Saad, *Al-Tabaqat*, part 2, p. 204.

When he stood in the midst of the graves, he said: "Peace be upon you, inhabitants of the cemetery. Congratulations on your condition which differs from the conditions under which the people are living. I wish you knew what God has saved you from. The faith-testing crises are coming like pieces of a dark night, following each other. The last is worse than the first."

The Prophet Predicted Companions' Failure in Test

The Holy Prophet informed the Muslims that many of his companions will lose their faith after his death. Here are a number of hadiths which speak clearly of that:

Al-Bukhari (in part 8 of his Sahih) in the book of prayers, the section of "Al-Houdh" (the Basin), p. 149, recorded that Anas reported that the Prophet said: "Men from my companions will come to me on the day of judgment while I am at Al-Houdh (the Basin). When I recognize them, they will be taken away. I say: My Lord, these are my companions. He will say: You do not know what they innovated after you."

From the same source, p. 150, we find that Abu Hazim reported that Sahl Ibn Saad said that the Holy Prophet said:

"I shall be the first among you to come to the Basin of the Water on the Day of Judgement. Whoever comes to me will drink, and whoever drinks will never become thirsty. Groups will come to me on that day, I know them and they know me. Then, they will be separated from me." Abu Hazim said: "Al-Naaman Ibn Ayyash said: Did you hear it from Sahl this way? I said: Yes. He said: I testify that I heard Abu-Sa-eed Al-Khidri adding to it the following: "Then I say: They are from me. I will be told: You do not know what they innovated after you. I say: Woe to those who changed after me."

Muslim in his Sahih recorded this hadith in part 15, pp. 53-54, Al-Bukhari also reported that Sa-eed Ibn Al-Musayyab said that Abu Huraira used to say that the

Messenger of God said: "A group from my companions will come to me on the Day of Judgment (seeking to drink from the Basin) and they will be driven away from the Basin. I will say: My Lord, these are my companions. He will say: You have no knowledge of what they innovated after you. They deserted their faith and retreated after you." (part 8, p. 149)

Sa-eed Ibn Al-Musayyab used to say that the companions of the Holy Prophet said that the Prophet said that.

And on p. 151 recorded that Ata-a Ibn Yasar said that Abu Huraira reported that the Prophet said:

"While I am standing, a group of men will come, and when I recognize them, a man comes between me and them, and he will say (to them) 'Come with me.' I shall say: 'Where to?' He will say 'To the Fire, by God.' I shall say: 'What is their problem?' He will say 'They deserted their faith and retreated after you.' Then another group (will come). And when I recognize them, a man comes between me and them. Then he will say to them, 'Come with me.' I shall say 'Where to?' He replies 'To the Fire.' I say 'What is their problem?' He says 'They deserted their faith and retreated after you. I see only a few, like abandoned camels, will be saved from among them.'"

Al-Buknari (in part 4 of his Sahih), in the book of the Beginning of the Creation under the caption: "And God took Abraham as a friend," p. 169, recorded that Sa-eed Ibn Jubair reported that Ibn Abbas said that the Holy Prophet said: "You will be resurrected, barefooted, naked, uncircumsized." Then, he recited the following verse: 'As We started the first creation, We shall re-create it. This is a promise from Us. Certainly We shall do it.' And the first one to be clothed on the Day of Judgment will be Abraham. There will be people from my companions who will be taken to the left. I will say: My companions, my companions. God will say: They deserted their faith since you left them. I shall say as the good servant of God (Jesus) said: I witnessed them as long as I was with them . . . "

Muslim in his Sahih recorded that Abdullah reported

that the Messenger of God said: "I am your first at the Basin of the water on the Day of Judgment, and I shall be disputed concerning some groups and they will be taken away from me. I shall say: "My Lord, these are my companions. It will be said to me: You do not know what they innovated after you." (part 15, p. 59)

Muslim in his Sahih, (part 15, p. 64) recorded also that Anas Ibn Malik reported that the Holy Prophet said:

"Men from my companions will come to drink from the Basin on the Day of Judgment. When I see them and they come to me, they will be barred from me. I shall say: My Lord, (these are) my companions. And I will be told: Certainly you do not know what they innovated after you."

The Messenger of God foresaw, through the Light of God, the near future of his nation fraught with crises which will test the faith of the believers. He congratulated the companions who died during his time because they did not live until the days of those faith-testing crises. It is inconceivable that he let his nation face such crises after him without providing the nation with the best qualified leader who could lead the Muslims to the right road if they chose to follow him.

The Prophet is the guardian of the Muslims. When a father knows that his children are surrounded by dangers of which they are unaware, he should not leave them without the best possible means which they can use, if they choose to pass the dangers safely. The Prophet is too great to leave the nation, whom he loved so dearly, without any guardian or security against spiritual dangers.

When the Holy Prophet knows that his nation will be in such a difficult position after his death, it becomes his most important duty to choose a navigator that leads the ship of the nation to avoid her the perilous waves of the crises which he expects his nation to pass through.

This would be his important duty regardless of the nature of the principles of his reformatory message and its consonance or inconsonance with election. Should the nature of the Islamic principles be consonant with the elec-

tion and the election be safe under normal circumstances, it would not be safe at the exceptional situations which the Holy Prophet expected his nation to pass through. To leave the nation to the chances of election during those dangerous circumstances would be a negligence of the trust which would not be committed by the greatest trustee and the master of the Prophets who was sent to mankind to lead them to the right path and spare them spiritual crises.

THE NEED FOR AN AUTHORITY IN INTERPRETATION OF THE QUR'AN AND COMMUNICATION OF THE PROPHET'S INSTRUCTIONS.

There is a third reason which makes us expect the Messenger to deputize a person to lead the nation after his absence. The Heavenly message as the Messenger left it needed an exponent who could inform the nation about its details.

The Messenger left to his nation the Book of God and the instructions of the Prophet, and he commanded the nation to follow these two important guides.

Interpretation of the Qur'an

The Book of God can be interpreted in more than one way. Its true interpretation is not known even to the great Muslim scholars. The Muslim scholars disagree and have various opinions. Each group of them cites the Holy Qur'an as evidence on its opinion. To illustrate this we mention the following: Some scholars believe that man's touch of a woman in any form spoils ablution. These scholars cite for their opinion the following Qur'anic verse:

“ . . . If you are ill or on a journey, or one of you comes from offices of nature, or ye have been touching

woman and ye find no water, then take for yourselves clean soil, and rub therewith your faces and hands. For God does blot out sins and forgives again and again.”¹⁰

These scholars take this verse as evidence on their opinions because they understand from the word “touching woman” the mere touch of any part of a woman’s body. Therefore they believe that renewal of ablution would be necessary when a person touches the hand of his wife even unintentionally.

Some of the scholars believe that mere touch of woman does not spoil ablution. What spoils the ablution is intercourse. They cite for their opinion the verse itself because they understand from touching women what is beyond the mere touch.

The Muslim scholars disagree on some aspects of the ablution. Some of them believe that washing both feet is a part of the ablution. This group can cite the following verse:

“O ye who believe, when ye prepare for prayer, wash your faces and your hands to the elbows; and wipe your heads and your feet to the ankles . . . ”¹¹

Some of the authorities on reading the Holy Qur’an read the verse in a way that it appears to make the feet join the face, so both would be washed.

Another group of scholars believes that the feet are to be wiped, rather than washed, and this group can cite the same verse because some of the authorities in reading the Holy Qur’an read the verse in a way that it appears to have

10. The Holy Qur’an, chapter 4, verse 43.

11. The Holy Qur’an, chapter 5, verse 8.

the feet join the head. So as you wipe your head, you wipe your feet.¹²

In matters belonging to the creed of Islam which is more important than the details of ablution, we find the Muslim scholars divided, and each division cites for its opinion verses from the Holy Qur'an. To illustrate this, we mention the following:

The advocates of predestination cite the following verses for their opinion:

“Thou makes whomever thou chooses unguided and guides whomever thou chooses . . . ” (Chapter 7, verse 155)

Again:

“You cannot lead to the right road whomever you love, but God leads whomever He Chooses . . . ” (Chapter 28, verse 56). “And you shall not will unless God wills . . . ” (76:29-30)

The advocates of man's freedom and that he is not predestined to follow a specific course in his action or inaction, also cite verses from the Holy Qur'an of which are the following:

“ . . . God does not change the condition of a people until they change their own condition . . . ” (Chapter 13, verse 12). “And man has not but what he works for, and that his work shall be seen.” (Chapter 53, verses 40-41)

In the relation of the people to their ruler, a group of

12. Al-Fakhr Al-Razi, in his *Commentary on the Holy Qur'an*, chapter 5, mentioned that Ibn Kuthayer and Assim and Hamzah read the verse in a way indicating the wiping rather than washing the feet is the duty in the ablution. He also mentioned two other readers: Nafi-a and Ibn Amir, along with Assim read the verse in a way indicating that washing rather than wiping the feet is the duty (conveyed by Sheikh Mahmoud Shaltut in his “Tafseer Al-Qur'an” Commentary on Chapter 5).

Muslim scholars believe that people have to obey the ruler and not oppose him even if he is a transgressor. These scholars can cite for their opinion the following verse: “O you who believe, obey God and obey the Apostle and people of authority among you . . . ” (Chapter 4, verse 59) The verse may be understood to command the Muslims to obey their leaders even if they were transgressors, disobedient to God in words and deeds.

Other scholars believe that when the ruler is neglecting the interest of the nation and administers its affairs opposite of what God has commanded, he is to be disobeyed and overthrown. They can cite for their opinion the same verse, because it commands the Muslims to obey God and His Messenger, and when the transgressor ruler commands people to follow the wrong road, his disobedience would be imperative. To disobey such a ruler is to obey God and His Messenger, and to obey him is to disobey God and His Messenger.

These are only a few of many examples where scholars with contradictory opinions can cite a verse or verses from the Holy Qur’an and each one of them tries to show the agreement of his opinion with the Qur’an. Yet the Holy Qur’an does not contradict itself, and its true meaning cannot agree with contradictory opinions. Therefore, some of the parties who contradict each other must be wrong. Who should inform us of the true meaning of the Holy Qur’an after the Holy Prophet departed from this world? Should that be left to election? Election of a person does not make him aware of the true interpretation of the Holy Qur’an.

This is our situation with the Holy Qur’an which was recited by the Messenger and memorized by his companions who recited it day and night, and every one of its verses was written during the time of the Messenger. What would be our situation with the instructions of the Holy Prophet? Do we need an authority to resort to in this area? The answer is in the affirmative.

Categories of Hadiths

The instructions of the Holy Prophet were not written during his time; nor did he, as far as we know, advise any of his companions to write them. Most of the Prophet's instructions had not been written in any of the known books during the first century after the Hijra. Very few hadiths were written during that period. What was recorded during the second century and afterwards was mostly uncertain. The absolute majority of the hadiths which reported those instructions were narrated by one or a small number of reporters. The first reporter was a companion. The companion did not record the hadith; nor did the one who heard from him. The same thing happened with the third and the fourth until the hadith passed through many mediums. Finally, the hadith was recorded, but many hadiths were sifted and recorded in what are called Sahihs or Authentics, but that did not free them completely of discrepancy.

Most of the hadiths which are free of contradictions cannot generate certainty. The hadiths are the sources of information about the words or the deeds of the prophet or his silent approvals. But these sources of information are mostly uncertain for the following reasons:

Hadith by Numerous Reporters

These sources of information are of two kinds: One kind is what we call "Mutawatir." The "Mutawatir" hadith is a statement or an action of the Prophet which was reported by numerous companions. These companions reported what they heard or witnessed. The report of each one of these companions arrived to us through independent and reliable channels. This kind of hadith is the best source of religious information after the Holy Qur'an. For this kind of hadith generates certainty in our minds in relation to reported statements or actions of the Holy Prophet.

Unfortunately, hadiths of this kind are not abundant. The books of hadith do not contain sufficient quantities of

this type of hadiths to inform us about the details of the Islamic teaching and the Prophet's instructions.

Hadith Reported by Few

The absolute majority of the hadiths came to us through channels in which one narrator reported what he heard from another who heard it from a third, and so on until we get back to reports which were heard from a companion who had heard the statement from the Prophet.

This kind of hadith does not make us certain that the Messenger said or did what the hadith reported. Certainty takes more than one or two sources of information to be generated. Let us remember that the companion who was the first of the reporters did not record the statement in a book. He only delivered it verbally to his student, and the recipient delivered it to his student until it finally was recorded.

Let us remember also that many of the reporters, including some of the companions of the Prophet, were not reliable.

To say that all the companions were righteous is illogical. A good number of them such as Muaweyah, Amr Ibn Al-Auss, Samarah Ibn Jandab, Naaman Ibn Basheer, Mugheerah Ibn Shu-Abah, Walid Ibn Aqabah, Abdullah Ibn Abu Sarh, and even Talhah, Al-Zubeir and others had participated in (or caused) the shedding of blood of good Muslims in order to reach high positions. Many of them were assisting the rulers who shed Muslims' blood. Some of them such as Abu Hurairah, was extravagant in reporting what he claimed to have heard or witnessed from the Prophet. The number of the hadiths of Abu Hurairah is larger than the total hadiths which were reported by the outstanding companions put together, in spite of their long companionship to the Prophet and the short time of the companionship of Abu Hurairah to the Prophet.

We had already mentioned in this chapter that the messenger stated in many authentic hadiths which were

reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim that many companions of the Prophet will stray from his path after his death, that they will be sent on the Day of Judgment to the place of punishment, and that the Holy Prophet will declare on that day that he is clear from them.

The hadith specialists are not in agreement on the reliability of many of the reporters; one scholar testifies for the reliability of a narrator and another one testifies for his weakness. However, we ought not forget that the reliable reporter is susceptible to forget or to be erroneous in his report.

An outstanding companion may report a hadith, believing in the truthfulness of what he reported and believing that he understood what the Messenger said, even though he may be mistaken. Muslim reported in his *Sahih* that Omar Ibn Al-Khattab said to his daughter Hafsa that the messenger said "The deceased would be punished by the cry of his family," and that his son Abdullah reported the same. When Ayesha was informed of the report of Omar and his son Abdullah, she said "No, by God, the Messenger of God never said that the deceased would be punished for the cry of anybody. But he said the punishment of the unbeliever would increase by the cry of his family, and no soul bears the burden of another soul." And that when she was informed of the report of Omar and his son, she said: "You are telling me about two persons who are neither liars nor discredited, but the ear may mishear."¹³

According to another hadith: When she heard that Ibn Omar reported that hadith, she said: "The Prophet only said: "He (the deceased) is being punished for his sin, while his family is crying for him."¹⁴

The two Sheikhs reported that Amir Ibn Masrooq said to Ayesha: "Did Mohammad see his Lord?" She said: "My hair stood up because of what you said. Do not over-

13. Muslim, in his *Sahih*, part 6, pp. 230-232.

14. Mahmoud Abu Rayyah, *Adwa' Ala Al-Sunnah Al-Nabawiyah*, p. 74, (edition 3).

look the fact that there are three items whoever informs you that they took place would be lying. Whoever informs you that Mohammad saw his Lord lies. Then she recited: 'The eyes do not see Him, and He sees all the eyes, and He is the invisible the knower . . . ' Muslim reported this and added that Amir said: I was reclining. When I heard what she said, I sat up and said: Did not God say 'And he had seen Him yet another time?' She said: 'I am the first one who asked the Messenger of God about this, saying: Messenger of God, did you see your Lord? He said: 'No, I only saw Gabriel coming down.'¹⁵

This means that we know only little (with certainty) of the teachings of the Holy Prophet (which is called Sunnah). It is what we learned through the "Mutawatir" hadiths which were reported independently by numerous reporters whose cooperation in forging a lie would be improbable. These "Mutawatir" hadiths are very few. Most of the hadiths are not of this type. They were reported only by one or a small number of reporters. Such hadiths would not produce certainty, even if they were authentic and their reporters considered reliable because a reliable person can forget or misunderstand what he heard.

Of course it is our duty to accept this kind of authentic "non-Mutawatir" hadiths, because some verses from the Holy Qur'an advise us to accept these hadiths.

We have the right to accept these hadiths and we are excused in the eyes of God if those hadiths were not in agreement with the fact. Yet, the goal of the Islamic message is to follow the actual meaning of the Qur'an and the certain instructions of the Prophet, rather than the uncertain kind. Straying from the right road is nothing but a disagreement with fact. What the Holy Prophet aimed at was to leave to his nation what secures it against straying.

It is reported through numerous channels that the Messenger of God said in his sermon during his valedictory pilgrimage the following:

15. Mahmoud Abu Rayyah, *Adhwa Ala Al-Sunnah Al-Nabawiyah*, p. 74.

“Certainly I have left for you what if you uphold, you will never go astray: The Book of God and the members of my House . . . ”¹⁶

It is recorded also in *Al-Muwatta*, by Imam Malik and by Ibn Husham in his *Biography of the Prophet* that the Holy Prophet said during the Valedictory Pilgrimage the following:

“ . . . O people, understand my word, for I have delivered (the message) to you, and I have left for you what if you fortify yourselves with, you will never go astray: A clear teaching: The Book of God, and Sunnah (the instructions) of His Prophet . . . ”

The two hadiths indicate that the goal of the Messenger was to insure his nation against error. The first hadith contains a clear message which is easy to understand. If the members of the House of the Holy Prophet had possessed the knowledge of the interpretation of the Holy Qur'an and the actual instructions of the Holy Prophet, the nation will know through the two sources the exact truth.

To understand the second hadith, we need some kind of interpretation in order to make its contents conceivable. This hadith tells us of two things:

1. That we have to follow the Book of God and the instructions of the Holy Prophet.

2. Adherence to these two sources is a security to the Muslims against straying. Yet, following the Book of God and the instructions of the Holy Prophet may secure us against straying only if the meaning of the words of the Book of God and the real instructions of the Holy Prophet are known with certainty. The known meaning of the Book and the known instructions of the Holy Prophet unite the Muslims. Therefore, the Muslims are in full agreement about every *Muhkam* (clear) verse which has a

16. Al-Termathi, in his authentic *Sunan*, part 5, p. 328 (hadith no. 3874)

clear message and about every known instruction from the Holy Prophet. But when the outward meaning of a verse is in conflict with the outward meaning of another verse and we need to interpret this or the other one, the interpretation multiplies and all of them become uncertain. If each party follows what it chooses of such interpretations, the Muslims would be bound to stray from the right road. This is because the interpretations contradict each other, and some of them have to be wrong. This is surely in disagreement with what actually was meant by the two verses.

The Messenger informed us through the fortification hadith (the second hadith) that if we fortify ourselves with the Holy Qur'an and the "Sunnah" of the Holy Prophet, we would be secured against straying and deviation. The fact remained that he left to us the Holy Qur'an with written and known verses, but he did not leave us written hadiths. He left us a small number of "Mutawatir" (well known hadiths) and a large number of non-"Mutawatir" hadiths which do not represent a security against straying, because they produce conjecture rather than certainty.

The various Islamic schools are physical evidence that the Holy Qur'an and the hadiths were not a security to the nation against straying. The scholars who formed those schools were relying in their verdicts on the Book of God and the "Sunnah" of the Holy Prophet, yet they did not agree on the details of the rules. Had they been in agreement, we would have had only one school. By the existence of varieties of schools, the difference among Muslims took place. This difference brought struggles and hostilities, and sometimes a great deal of blood shedding. All that proves that the nation had strayed from the right road in spite of the endeavors of its scholars to try to follow the Qur'an and the "Sunnah."

Yet, we know that the Holy Messenger does not say but the truth and he, according to the fortification hadith, said that the Holy Qur'an and his "Sunnah" are security against straying. This should make us realize that the

meaning of the word “Sunnah,” is the known Sunnah, rather than the surmised Sunnah.

Since the “Sunnah” of the Holy Prophet was not known to the Muslims, the Holy Prophet should have left to his nation a means through which the nation can know, if it chooses, the real teaching of the Holy Prophet with certainty and be able through that means to know the real meaning of the Holy Qur’an.

It would be logical to assume that that “means” is a person who knows the interpretation of the Holy Qur’an and the actual teaching of the Holy Prophet. That man represents the Holy Prophet in teaching his nation what that nation needs to know of the “Sunnah” of the Holy Prophet and the interpretation of the Book of God.

Could election secure this kind of leadership which can inform the nation completely about the interpretation of the Holy Qur’an and the actual teachings of the Holy Prophet?

The nation cannot obtain that knowledgeable leadership through election. The nation can give its leadership to whomever it chooses, but it cannot make that chosen leader knowledgeable of the “Sunnah” of the Holy Prophet. Election of a person by the nation does not change his personality, nor would it make him knowledgeable if he is ignorant; nor would it make him profoundly knowledgeable in the Book of God and the teachings of the Holy Prophet if he does not know it. Thus, we logically come to the conclusion that the Holy Prophet should choose for his nation a knowledgeable leader who would be entrusted to perform the mission of keeping the nation on the right path.

The Prophet would not leave the matter to the election by the people. We are certain of this because we know that the nation did not elect after the death of the Holy Prophet the most knowledgeable among his students for its leadership.

Was there among the Muslims such a knowledgeable person? And did the Holy Prophet choose that knowledgeable one for the leadership of the Islamic nation? You may find the answer in the following chapters.

Had What Ought to Be Done Been Done?

We have discussed in the previous chapter the method by which a successor to the Holy Prophet should come to power. We have mentioned that in spite of the legitimacy and appropriateness of elective government, this kind of government should not exist when it is possible to establish a government based on a Prophet's directive. We have mentioned that there are three reasons which invite us to believe that the Holy Prophet should have chosen for his followers a man to lead them after him:

1. The nature of the Islamic principles is not consonant with the election because the Islamic principles are reformatory and not desirable to people. The founder of the Islamic State who was the proclaimer of the reformatory principles should not leave the selection of his deputy to a populous election or to a partisan election. He should choose the one whom he thinks is the best among the members of his party to become his deputy. Leaving it to election may bring to power the unqualified and endanger the reformatory principles.

2. The nation was about to face dangers and crises which were expected to test the faith of the believers, and the Holy Prophet was aware of that. He should have chosen for the ship of the nation a navigator to lead that ship through the turbulence of the crises and not to let the navigator be chosen by election.

3. The nation was and is still, in need of an authority after the Holy Prophet to inform the nation of the interpretations of the Holy Qur'an and the real instructions of the Holy Prophet. This is because the Holy Prophet did not leave written instructions. The election could not secure for us the needed authority who knew the meanings of the Holy Qur'an as they are and the actual instructions of the Holy Prophet. Should the companions of the Prophet elect a person, their election would not change the personality of their elect; nor would it make him completely knowledgeable in this field if he were not so.

The needed authority would not be secured except through a directive by the Holy Prophet, because the Holy Prophet knew the most knowledgeable among his companions.

It can be said that all of what these three reasons lead us to is to believe that it was expected from the Prophet to appoint a particular person who has all the needed qualifications for the leadership of the nation. But these reasons do not prove that what was expected had taken place. Had there been any directive by the Prophet concerning this matter?

We shall try in the following chapters to answer this question which actually is a combination of two important questions:

1. Had there been among the companions of the Prophet a man who had all the needed qualifications for the leadership including complete knowledge of the interpretation of the Holy Qur'an and the Islamic Law?

2. Suppose that the man with these qualifications did exist, had the Holy Prophet appointed him?

We find the answer to these two questions in a number of statements which the Holy Prophet pronounced at various times and places.

ALI IS THE GATE OF THE CITY OF KNOWLEDGE

The Holy Prophet informed his followers of the existence of a man who was the treasurer of the knowledge of the Holy Prophet, and he declared to them that if they want to reach the knowledge of the Holy Prophet, they should take that knowledge from that treasurer. He said (and Ibn Abbas reported): "I am the city of knowledge and Ali is the gate (door) of that city. Whoever wishes to enter that city, he should come through its gate." Or he said; Whoever wants that city should come to the door." Jabir Ibn Abdullah Al-Ansari reported that the Messenger said "I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate; whoever wants the knowledge should come to the gate."¹

This statement shows us that the Messenger had informed the Muslims of two important matters:

1. That the knowledgeable person whom the nation needs is available, and that Ali Ibn Abu Talib is that knowledgeable one.

2. If the Muslims want to have the knowledge of the Holy Prophet, Ali would be the only way through which they can obtain it. It is the duty of the Muslims to try to reach that knowledge. Thus, their quest of Ali's knowledge and his guidance would be of their most important duties. This is because knowledge has to precede the deed. If we want to have a sound deed, it has to be in accordance with the teachings of the Messenger. The continuation of the accord of our deeds with the instructions of the Holy Prophet is dependent on our knowledge of those instructions.

The hadiths which indicate that Ali is the gate of the city of knowledge are not the only hadiths which speak of the superiority of Ali's knowledge. There are many other

1. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 127. Ibn Jareer reported the hadith and considered it authentic (conveyed by Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi, *Kanz Al-Ammal*, part 15, p. 13, hadith no. 348-379).

hadiths. Some of them were mentioned before and all of them testify to the fact that Ali was the most knowledgeable in the Islamic teachings among the followers of the Holy Prophet.

It suffices to mention the hadith of Om Selemah, wife of the Holy Prophet who said: "I heard the Messenger of God saying: Ali is with the Qur'an and the Qur'an is with Ali. They do not part with each other until they meet me at the Basin (on the Day of Judgement)."²

Al-Hakim recorded that Anas Ibn Malik reported that the Holy Prophet said to Ali: "You shall inform my nation about the truth and what they dispute about after me": He said this is an authentic hadith according to the stipulation of the two Sheikhs (Al-Bukhari, and Muslim).³

Al-Termathi in his authentic Sunan recorded that the Messenger of God said: "God, have Thy mercy on Ali. God, make the right and the truth with Ali in all situations."⁴

Abu Na-eem recorded that Ibn Mas-ood said: "The Holy Qur'an . . . has outward and inward meanings, and Ali Ibn Abu Talib has the knowledge of both."⁵

Imam Ahmad reported that the Messenger said to his daughter Fatimah Al-Zahra: "Are you not satisfied that I have married you to the one who is the earliest in Islam among my followers, their most knowledgeable, and their greatest in wisdom?"⁶

Al-Hakim recorded that Qais Ibn Abu Hazim reported that he heard Saad Ibn Abu Waqas saying to a man from Damascus who cursed Ali: "Man, why do you curse Ali? Was he not the first one who embraced Islam? Was he not the first one who prayed with the Messenger of God? Was

2. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 124.

3. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 122.

4. Al-Termathi, his authentic *Sunan*, part 5, p. 297.

5. Abu Na-eem, *Hilyat Al-ouliya'*, part 1, p. 65 (Al-Fairozabadi, *Fadha-il Al-Khansah*).

6. Imam Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*, part 5, p. 26.

he not the most knowledgeable among people? Then Saad said: God, this man has cursed a man from the highest righteous among Thy servants. I ask Thee not to let this group leave this place until Thou show them Thy power. The man from Damascus immediately fell from the mount of his horse on stones and his head was split and he died.””

Of course, it could be said that these hadiths only indicate that Ali was a leader in the Shari-ah (Islamic Law), the interpretation of the Book of God and the instructions of the Holy Prophet. But they do not indicate that he was the political leader of the nation and its appointed ruler. Thus, it does not prove his immediate succession of the Holy Prophet.

The weakness of this argument would be obvious when we realize that the purpose of the Messenger from these statements is to lead his nation and to inform it of the road which secures its adherence to the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet. The nation would not walk on that road if the affairs of the Muslims are handled by a man who is other than the man whom the Prophet trusted with his knowledge of the Islamic Law and made him the door of guidance to the Muslims.

The Muslims may walk on that road only if they have a positive attitude towards the man whom the Holy Prophet trusted with his knowledge. What took place in the history testifies to that. In spite of all these statements by the Prophet concerning Ali, the nation did not take from the teaching of the Imam Ali but a little compared to what they took from the companions who were not comparable to the Imam in knowledge. We shall speak of this in details when we comment on the Hadith of Al-Thaqalain.

However, there are other statements which are more indicative of the appointment of the Imam Ali by the Holy

7. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 499

Prophet for the leadership of the nation. Some of these statements took place before the Hijrah and some of them took place after the Hijrah. Most of them took the shape of general declarations directed to groups of people.

The Home Conference

Three years after the commencement of his prophethood, the Holy Prophet declared that Ali is his brother, his executor, and successor. This was in accordance with the logical and natural course. The Prophet needed a strong and truly helpful minister to support him and to aid him in spreading the message and building the State which is expected to be built on the foundation of the principles of the Heavenly Message. This was not unprecedented in the history of prophethood. Moses asked his Lord to support him with a minister from the members of his family, Aaron his brother.

A minister who is strong enough to face the dangers which the Holy Prophet was expected to face ought to become his deputy and caliph who replaces him when anything happens to him. By this, the Holy Prophet would have taken whatever he could take of precaution in order to secure the continuity of the Message and its defusion when he departs from this world instead of leaving its future to chances.

The reader may recall that we have discussed in the fifth chapter (vol. 1) what the Messenger did when his Lord commanded him, after three years from the commencement of the Message, to warn his closest relatives when the following verses were revealed: "And warn thy nearest kinsmen. And lower thy wing to the believers who

follow thee. Then if they disobey thee, say: I am free (of responsibility) for what ye do . . . ”¹

The Holy Prophet at that time invited the children of Abdul-Muttalib who were the closest of his kinsmen. They were at that time thirty or forty men. He invited them for a banquet which contained a small amount of food and milk. They ate and drank from the little food and milk until they were satisfied. When the opportunity came, the Holy Prophet spoke to them saying, (and the Imam Ali reported it):

“O children of Abdul-Muttalib, by God, I know of no young man from among the Arabs ever brought his people better than I brought to you. I have brought to you the best for you in this world and in the Hereafter. Certainly, God has commanded me to invite you to it. Who is among you that will be my minister in this mission and he will become my brother, my executor and my successor among you?” The audience kept silent. Ali said, “Prophet of God, I will be your minister in this mission.” He held my neck and said: “This is my brother, my executor, and my successor among you. Listen to him and obey him.” The group laughed, saying to Abu Talib: “He commanded you to listen to your son and to obey him!”

Al-Tabari recorded this hadith in his history (part 2, page 216).

Ibn Al-Atheer in his history Al-Kamil (part 2, page 41) recorded this hadith, and so did Abu Al-Fida in his history (part 1, page 116), Al-Khazin Ala-o-Deen Al-Baghdadi in his commentary on the Holy Qur’an (page 390) and Al-Sayooti in his book Jami-Al-Jawami-a (part 7, page 392) where he mentioned it in reliance on Al-Tabari. In the same part (page 397) he reported that all the six reliable recorders of the hadith (Ibn Is-Haq, Ibn Jareer, Ibn Abu Hashim, Ibn Mardawaih, Abu Na-eem and Al-Baihaqi) reported this hadith in their books. Ibn Abu Al-Hadeed in his commentary on Nahjul-Balagha (volume 3, page 254) also recorded this hadith and Mohammad Hussein Haikal

1. The Holy Qur’an, chapter 26, verses 214-216.

also recorded it in his book *Hayaat Mohammad*, first edition (page 104).²

I have already discussed in the fifth chapter the significance of this declaration. What I want to mention now is that this declaration indicates that the Messenger was looking through the light of God at the future which was stored for the blessed Message of Islam of diffusion throughout the world. He was also expecting the birth of a state built on its principles, and that the carrier of this message, who would be the leader of a nation, will need a deputy that represents him and succeeds him, and that that deputy ought to be obeyed as the man of Message ought to be obeyed. Therefore, he said to the group: "Listen to him, and obey him." Thus, the deputy has an authority similar to the authority of his leader.

Some scholars say that this hadith indicates only that Ali is the successor of the Holy Prophet among the children of Abdul-Muttalib. It does not indicate that he is the successor of the Prophet for all the Muslims.

This argument is unsound. The caliphate cannot be partitioned, so the Messenger would have two caliphs: One for the Hashimites, and one for the rest of the Muslims. The caliph has to be for all the Muslims because the Messenger is the head of all the Muslims and so is his caliph.

The Muslims in regard to the caliphate, are two factions: One says that the Messenger did not appoint a successor; the other says that he appointed Ali Ibn Abu Talib. There is no third faction that says that the Messenger appointed a caliph for the Hashimites and left the rest of the Muslims without a caliph. The Holy Prophet would not make a clannish discrimination by appointing a caliph for his clan and leaving the rest of the Muslims without leadership. The Prophet, by the nature of his message, is supposed to be more concerned with the future of his na-

2. I relied in recording the above sources on Sheikh Al-Ameeni, in his book *Al-Ghadeer*, part 2, pp. 279-280.

tion than with the future of his clan. Therefore, it would be inconceivable that he appoints for his clan a religious authority that represents him and replaces him, then leaves the millions of his followers without authority and leadership.

Before I end my deliberation about this declaration, I would like to dwell a little while upon the significance of the contents of this declaration.

The Final of the Prophets of God “brothered” a child of thirteen years and appointed him a “caliph” (successor) of his, after that child gave the Prophet a promise that he will be his minister in his important mission.

Let us first ask: What is the value of a promise of a child at this age to assist in such a tremendous mission which is concerned with the future of Islam and fraught with great consequences of this kind?

Suppose a child of this age promises to assist you in realizing a considerably important project for the future. How can you rely on his promise? And what is the value of a promise of such a child whose opinion may change and his attitude could be reversed within days or hours?

Again, how could the Holy Prophet know the righteousness of Ali and his capability of leadership in his future life while he is still thirteen years old? The life of a child who seems to be good and righteous could change during his youth and manhood, and his nature could become corrupt. It is also possible for a child, who seems to be corrupt, to change and become one of the best people during the days of his manhood. It is impossible for any human to know with certainty the future of a child. The knowledge of this belongs only to God who knows the future of everything.

The Holy Prophet’s acceptance of Ali’s promised assistance in making the mission a success and the Prophet’s taking that promise with such a high consideration shows that the Prophet had foreseen the bright future of Ali with utmost certainty. Giving that child the high ranks of brotherhood, executorship, and successorship implies a clear prophecy concerning Ali and his future superiority in

knowledge, righteousness, bravery and wisdom. It was impossible for the Messenger as a human being to foresee the future. He only saw that future through a revelation from God.

The high ranks which were bestowed upon him were only by the order of God and as a reward from God to Ali for his promise of assistance which the Almighty knew that it will be implemented with unparalleled sincerity.

All that indicates that Ali, while he was in his childhood, was above the rest of men and his brilliant future made him the candidate whom the Almighty chose to succeed His Messenger.

The authenticity of this hadith and the magnanimity of its content is supported by its accordance with the Hadith of the Analogy of Ali to Aaron which we shall deal with in the following pages and which is considered of the most authentic hadiths in the eyes of the Muslim scholars.

The Hadith of the Analogy “You Are to Me Like Aaron to Moses”

We have mentioned in the previous pages that the Messenger declared on the day of his conference with his close relatives in front of thirty or forty men from the children of Abdul-Muttalib and the Muttalibites that he “brothered” Ali and appointed him his successor and executor. This was a Divine reward to Ali for his genuine promise to the Messenger to be his minister in his mission. This event took place three years after the commencement of the prophethood of Mohammad and ten years before the Hijrah.

It was made clear in the fifth chapter that the Messenger at his conference with the members of his clan wanted to follow the method of Moses of which the Holy Qur’an informs us that when the Almighty commanded Moses to go to Fera, Moses prayed to the Lord, saying: “And give me a minister from my family: Aaron, my brother. Add to my strength through him, and make him share my task, that we may celebrate Thy praise without stint . . . ”¹

The Holy Prophet made his first declaration about Ali at the First Islamic Conference in front of thirty or forty men from the Hashimites. After nineteen years from the day of the conference, the Holy Prophet made a similar

1. The Holy Qur’an, chapter 20, verses 25-31.

declaration in front of thousands of Muslims when he was heading the Islamic army to Tabook (on the borders of Jordan).

During the month of Rajab of the ninth lunar year after the Hijrah, the Holy Prophet departed from Medina heading an army of twenty-five thousands of his followers aiming at the borders of Jordan, leaving Ali to take his place in Medina. This saddened Ali, because he did not want to be away from the Messenger. It is reported also that some hypocrites circulated a rumor that the Messenger left him behind because he did not like to accompany him.

Whatever was the reason, Ali followed the Messenger and reached him while he was still near Medina. A dialogue between the Prophet and Ali took place. The Prophet concluded the dialogue with a very important declaration which was recorded in the most authentic and highly considered books of hadith and history. Al-Bukhari recorded that Saad Ibn Abu Waqas reported the following:

“The Messenger of God took a journey to Tabook, and he appointed Ali to succeed him in Medina. Ali said to the Prophet: ‘Do you leave me with the children and the women?’ The Messenger replied: ‘Are you not satisfied to be to me like Aaron to Moses, except that there shall be no Prophet after me?’”²

Al-Bukhari also reported that Saad said: “The Prophet said to Ali: Are you not satisfied to be to me like Aaron to Moses?”³

Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad*⁴ and Al-Hakim in his *Al-Mustadrak*⁵ recorded that Ibn Abbas said in a hadith the following:

“The Messenger and the people departed for military operations in Tabook. Ali said to him: I will depart

2. Al-Bukhari, in his *Sahih*, part 6, p. 3.

3. Al-Bukhari, his *Sahih*, part 5, p. 24.

4. Imam Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*, part 1, p. 131.

5. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 133.

with you. The Prophet said to him: No. Ali became sad. The Messenger said to him: Are you not satisfied to be to me like Aaron to Moses, except that you are not a prophet? It would not be proper that I leave unless you are my successor.”

Mohammad Ibn Saad in his book *Al-Tabaqat* recorded that Zeid Ibn Arqam and Al-Bura Ibn Azib reported concerning the military journey of Tabook the following:

“The Messenger said to Ali: It would be necessary that I stay, or you stay (in Medina). So he left him in Medina. When the Messenger departed, some people said: He left Ali behind him only for something he hated about him. When this word reached Ali, he followed the Messenger (and informed the Messenger about what people were saying). The Messenger laughed and said: Ali, are you not satisfied to be to me like Aaron was to Moses, except that you are not a prophet? Ali said: Yes, Messenger of God. The Messenger said: It is as I told you.”⁶

“Ibn Husham recorded in his *Biography of the Prophet* that the Prophet said to Ali on that day:

“Ali, are you not satisfied to be to me like Aaron was to Moses, except that there shall be no prophet after me?”⁷

Muslim in his *Sahih* through channels to Saad Ibn Abu Waqas recorded that the Messenger said to Ali on that day: “Are you not satisfied that you are to me like Aaron to Moses, except that there shall be no prophethood after me?”⁸

Imam Ahmad reported this hadith through four channels to Saad Ibn Abu Waqas.⁹

Mohammad Ibn Majah in his *Sunan* reported the hadith of Saad.¹⁰

6. Ibn Saad, *Al-Tabaqat*, part 15, p. 176.

7. Ibn Husham, *Al-Seerat Al-Nabaweyah*, part 2, p. 172.

8. Muslim, his *Sahih*, part 15, p. 176.

9. Imam Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*, part 1, pp. 175-177-179-182.

10. Ibn Majah, his authentic *Sunan*, part 1, p. 45.

Al-Termathi also reported it in his *Sunan*.¹¹

Imam Ahmad recorded that this hadith also was reported by Asma Bint (daughter of) Omeis.¹²

Al-Hakim in *Al-Mustadrak* recorded the hadith of Saad.^{12a}

Ibn Abd-Al-Barr in his book “*Al-Istee-ab*” recorded the following:

“And the Prophet said to Ali: “You are to me like Aaron to Moses except that there shall be no Prophet after me.” The saying of the Prophet to Ali: You are to me like Aaron to Moses was reported by many companions and it is one of the best hadiths and most authentic. It was reported by Saad Ibn Abu Waqas . . . Also it was reported by Ibn Abbas, Abu Sa-eed Al-Khidri, Om Selemah (wife of the Prophet), Asma Bint Omeis, Jabir Ibn Abdullah, and numerous others.”¹³

If there is anyone that argues about the authenticity of the hadith of the conference of the Prophet with the members of his clan, I do not know of anyone from the Muslim scholars who argues about the authenticity of this Hadith of Analogy between Ali and Aaron. The authenticity of this hadith supports the authenticity of the Hadith of the Conference, because the two hadiths accord with each other and express the same meaning.

The Hadith of the Analogy between Ali and Aaron gives Ali all the offices of Aaron except the prophethood. Aaron was a brother of Moses and his minister. The Holy Qur’an states that Moses prayed to the Almighty, saying: “And give me a minister from my family: Aaron, my brother. Add to my strength through him.”¹⁴

Aaron was a deputy of Moses and the one who used to take his place and the Holy Qur’an testifies to that: “And We appointed for Moses thirty nights and completed (the

11. Al-Termathi, his authentic *Sunan*, part 5, p. 302.

12. Imam Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*, part 6, p. 3-23.

12a. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part , p. .

13. Mohammad Ibn Abd Al-Barr, *Al-Islee-ab*, part 3, p. 1,097.

14. The Holy Qur’an, chapter 20, verses 24-31.

period) with ten (more): Thus, the term of communion was completed with his Lord, forty nights. And Moses had charged his brother Aaron before he went up: "Succeed me amongst my people; do right and follow not the way of those who do mischief."¹⁵

Aaron, like Moses, was a leader of all the Israelites and was given from God an authority similar to that of Moses, and the Holy Qur'an declares that:

God said to Moses: "We will certainly strengthen thy arm through thy brother and invest you both with authority so they shall not be able to touch you; with Our evidence shall ye triumph, both of you as well as those who follow you."¹⁶

The phrase "with Our evidence shall ye triumph, both of you as well as those who follow you," indicates clearly that all those who believed in Moses were followers of Aaron as they were followers of Moses.

The verse also declares that God has given both of them authority and immunity, so the unbelievers cannot harm them and that Moses and Aaron along with their followers were destined to triumph over their opponents.

Ali, according to the statement of the Holy Prophet, has all these offices. He is the brother of the Messenger and God has strengthened the Messenger Mohammad through him, though there is a difference between the brotherhood of Aaron to Moses and the brotherhood of Ali to Mohammad. The brotherhood between Aaron and Moses was through birth and was not earned through any effort on the part of either one. The brotherhood between Mohammad and Ali is more significant, because it did not come to Ali through birth. It was bestowed upon Ali as a reward to him for his great endeavor. He was also his minister. He was also the deputy of the Messenger to represent and succeed him. He was, like the Messenger, leader of all the Muslims. What does the caliphate mean more than that?

15. The Holy Qur'an, chapter 7, verse 142.

16. The Holy Qur'an, chapter 28, verse 35.

Thus, the Messenger through this far-reaching statement has actually declared that his minister and deputy and the one who, like the Holy Prophet, is supposed to be followed and obeyed by all the Muslims, was only Ali, son of Abu Talib. All these ranks which are implied in the Hadith of Analogy between Ali and Aaron were clearly mentioned in the declaration of the conference where the Holy Prophet said: "This is my brother, executor and successor. Listen to him and obey him."

I would like to go back to the verse which declared that God had given Moses and Aaron authority and immunity that the unbelievers cannot harm them, that they and those who followed them are the triumphant. The similarity in this aspect between Moses and Aaron on one hand and between Mohammad and Ali on the other hand is obvious. The Almighty strengthened Mohammad through Ali. Ali's bravery was the wonder of the ages. Mohammad and Ali were given from God authority and immunity against the enemies of Islam. Thus, the unbelievers in spite of their overwhelming numbers compared to the small number of the Muslims in those days were unable to reach the Messenger or Ali with any serious harm. The Messenger and Ali and those who followed them were triumphant.

The Messenger was faced with situations in which the Muslims were outnumbered and many of them thought that defeat is the destiny of the camp of the Oneness of God. Yet through the firmness of the Messenger and the heroism of Ali, the Islamic camp was triumphant. The Muslims in more than one battle were defeated, but the Messenger and Ali remained at the battlefield alone. God protected them, and they prevailed against the opposing forces. The Messenger and his deputy Ali had lived while surrounded by dangers for twenty-three years, but the enemies of Islam were not able to harm them.

Unlimited Deputization

It may be said that the Hadith of Analogy between Ali

and Aaron came on a specific occasion, namely: The deputization of Ali by the Messenger to replace him during his journey to Tabook. Aaron, also was deputized by Moses during his absence when he went for the appointed time with the Lord. This means that the hadith does not indicate that Ali was the permanent deputy of the Messenger.

Of course, a person with a sole objective of disproving the Prophet's permanent deputization of Ali can say that. Yet, a neutral minded person can see in the hadith a clear indication that the Prophet had given Ali an unlimited deputization. Had the Holy Prophet meant only to deputize Ali at a particular occasion, his deputization would be like that of any other companion whom the Prophet appointed as temporary successor when he used to leave Medina. But the Prophet never likened any of them to Aaron.

The scholars who take this attitude have forgotten that the Messenger appointed temporary successors during the following campaigns:

Abu Lubabah to succeed him in Medina when he left to the Battle of Badr.

Ibn Arfatah when the Prophet left to Doumat Al-Jandal.

Ibn Om Maktoum during the military operations against Banu Quraidah, and Banu Lihyan, and Thee Qirad.

Abu Tharr when he left to Banu Al-Mustalaq.

Numeila during the time of Khaibar.

Ibn Al-Adbat during Omrat Al-Qada.

Abu Raham during the time of his military journey to Mecca.

Abu Dujanah during the Valedictory Pilgrimage.¹⁷

The Holy Prophet never said to any one of these temporary deputies what he said to Ali: "You are to me like

17. Ibn Husham, *Biography of the Prophet*. Look at the record of the journeys of the Prophet.

Aaron to Moses . . . ” He said that only to Ali, because he was not a temporary successor like these companions.

Furthermore, by excluding only the prophethood in the Hadith of Anology, the Prophet had clearly indicated that all the ranks of Aaron are bestowed on Ali. And none of Aaron’s ranks (*the ministry, the leadership, the prophethood—or the brotherhood*) was temporary. Thus, the deputization and successorship were permanent and not occasional.

The fact is that the Messenger used that occasion as a pulpit to declare the distinction of Ali, his leadership of the nation, his general deputization of him and that he was his only deputy.

The exception of the prophethood clearly indicates that Ali to the Holy Prophet is like Aaron to Moses in everything except the prophethood. The Holy Prophet in fact was saying to Ali that his position from him is like the position of Aaron to Moses in brotherhood, ministry, successorship, his leadership of the nation, and every rank other than the prophethood.

By saying “Except that there shall be no prophethood after me,” the Prophet actually had informed the Muslims that Ali was deprived of the prophethood, not because he was not qualified for it, but only because Mohammad is the Final of the Prophets. Had the Prophet not been the Final of all the Prophets, Ali would have been a Prophet like Aaron.

The Imam Ali in one of his sermons reported that the Holy Prophet told him during the period of the commencement of his prophethood: “Ali, you hear what I hear, and you see what I see, but you are not a prophet, and you are on the right path.”

The successorship of Aaron to his brother Moses when Moses went to the appointed time with his Lord never was a temporary mission. He succeeded Moses when he went to the mountain for forty nights, only because of his superior position among the Israelites, as Moses’ permanent deputy. And when the head of a nation is absent,

his deputy takes his place, as a matter of course, and as an exercise of his general function.

We have already advanced that the Holy Qur'an declares that Aaron was, like Moses, a leader of all the Israelites. God said to Moses: "We shall strengthen you through your brother and give you both authority that they will not reach you. With our evidence, both of you, along with those who follow you, shall triumph."

Since Ali's position was similar to that of Aaron, he would be like the Prophet Mohammad, a leader of all the Muslims. His deputization from the Prophet at the time of his absence would be a matter of course and an exercise of his general function, because he is the deputy of the head of the State.

This is some of what the Holy Messenger meant in his declaration. You have already read in the hadith of Ibn Abbas which was reported by Al-Hakim and Imam Ahmad that the Prophet told Ali: "Are you not satisfied that you are to me like Aaron to Moses except that you are not a prophet? It would be improper that I leave unless you are my successor."

The reader may wonder why many Muslim scholars did not understand from the Hadith of Analogy, with its clear indication, that the Prophet was trying to inform the Muslims that Ali is his successor.

The negative attitude of these scholars is due to the fact that they lived in societies predominantly subscribing to the theory that the Messenger of God died without appointing a successor after him. As they took this theory for granted, it was necessary for them to overlook the indication of any hadith that the Prophet had appointed Ali as successor in order to save the no-appointment-by-the-Prophet theory.

Had Abu Bakr been the subject of this declaration, instead of Ali, the negative attitude of many scholars would have been reversed. Had the Messenger said to Abu Bakr: "Are you not satisfied to be to me like Aaron to Moses except that there shall be no Prophet after me," the Muslim scholars of the majority would have found in the declara-

tion a clear evidence that the Messenger had appointed Abu Bakr as his successor. Had the Prophet said that, I would have believed that the Messenger had appointed Abu Bakr as his successor.

It is worthy to mention that the Messenger uttered the statement of analogy between Ali and Aaron on occasions other than the occasion of Tabook. Om Saleem, wife of Abu Ayyoub Al-Ansari, whom the Holy Prophet used to respect and visit, reported that the Messenger told her:

“Om Saleem, the flesh of Ali is from my flesh and his blood is from my blood, and he is to me like Aaron to Moses.”¹⁸

Al-Tabari recorded that Ibn Abbas reported that the Messenger said to Ali on the day of brotherhood (this was eight years before the occasion of Tabook):

“ . . . Ali, were you angry with me (showing his love to Ali as a brother shows his love to his brother) when I made brotherhoods between the Meccans and the Medinites and I did not make a brotherhood between you and any of them? Are you not satisfied to be to me like Aaron to Moses, except that there shall be no Prophet after me?”¹⁹

Asma Bint Omais (wife of Jaafar Al-Tayyar) said: “I heard the Messenger of God saying to Ali: You are to me like Aaron to Moses, except that there shall be no Prophet after me.”²⁰ Of course, Asma was not in the army of Tabook. So she heard the statement from the Messenger on a different occasion.

The Imam Al-Nisa-i in his *Al-Khassa-iss Al-Alaweyah* (the distinctions of Ali) reported that when Jaafar Ibn Abu Talib and Zeid Ibn Haritha and Imam Ali disputed each other about the guardianship of the orphan of Ham-

18. Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi, *Mukhtasar Kanz Al-Ummal* (printed on the margin of *Musnad* , part 5, pp. 31-32).

19. Conveyed by Sayed Sharaful-Deen, *Al-Murajaat*, p. 179.

20. Ibn Abd Al-Barr, *Al-Istee-ab*, part 3, p. 1,098.

zah, the Prince of Martyrs, the Messenger said: "Ali, you are to me like Aaron to Moses . . ."21

Al-Hassan Ibn Badr, Al-Hakim in his book *Al-Kuna*, Al-Shirazi in *Al-Alqab*, and Ibn Al-Najjar reported that the Messenger said to Ali while Abu Bakr, Omar, and Abu Obeidah Ibn Al-Jarrah were with the Prophet:

"Ali, you are the first of the believers in belief and their first in Islam, and you are to me like Aaron to Moses . . ."22

It is reported by Zeid Ibn Oufa that the Messenger of God said to Ali on the day of brotherhood (in the first year after the Hijra): "By the One Who sent me with the truth, I only preserved you for myself. You are to me like Aaron to Moses, except that there shall be no prophet after me, and you are my brother and my heir . . ."23

These hadiths and others, which I did not mention, indicate clearly that Ali was to the Holy Prophet like Aaron to Moses and that he had all offices of Aaron, except the prophethood. He was his permanent deputy and he was, like the Prophet, leader of all Muslims and the one whom they should follow.

This leadership which was given to him was only by the revelation from God to His great Messenger. The Messenger spoke of the analogy between the position of Ali and Aaron several times and on several occasions. The last occasion was during his journey to Tabook during the month of Rajab of the ninth year after the Hijrah.

A few months after that event, the Holy Messenger took a public stand similar to this, when he sent Abu Bakr to read to the pilgrims the declaration of the chapter of Bara-ah. Let us see what happened at that time.

21. Al-Nisa-I, *The Distinctions of Ali*, p. 19 (conveyed by Al-Fairouzabadi, *Fadha-Il Al-Khamsah*, part 1, p. 307).

22. Al-Muttaqi, Al-Hindi, *Kanz Al-Ummal*, part 6, p. 395 (conveyed by Al-Fairouzabadi, *Fadha-Il Al-Khamsah*, part 1, p. 312).

23. Al-Muttaqi, Al-Hindi, *Kanz Al-Ummal*, part 5, p. 40 (Al-Fairouzabadi, *Fadha-Il Al-Khamsah*, part 1, p. 311).

The Hadith of Performance and Delivery

NO ONE SHALL DELIVER FOR ME EXCEPT I OR A MAN FROM MY HOUSE.

Imam Ahmad in his Musnad recorded that Abu Bakr said: The Prophet sent me with the chapter of Bara-ah to the people of Mecca:

“No pagan should make a pilgrimage after this year. No naked shall circumnavigate around the Ancient House. No one shall enter Paradise except a Muslim soul. Any Pagan community that has between them and the Messenger of God a peace accord, the accord will end by the end of the specified period (without extention), and God and His Messenger are clear of the pagans.”

Abu Bakr traveled on for three days, then the Prophet said to Ali: “Follow him and send Abu Bakr back to me, and go on to deliver the message yourself.” Ali did that and Abu Bakr came back to the Prophet. He wept and said: Messenger of God, did anything happen concerning me? The Prophet said that nothing happened but good. “But I am commanded that no one should deliver it except myself or a man from me.”¹

Al-Hakim in his Sahih Al-Mustadrak recorded through his channel to Jumai-a Ibn Omair Al-Laithi that Abdullah Ibn Omar said to him:

“The Messenger of God sent Abu Bakr and Omar with

1. Imam Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*, part 1, p. 3.

the chapter of Bara-ah to the people of Mecca. The two men went on and suddenly a man overtook them. They asked: Who is this? He said: I am Ali. Abu Bakr, give me the written message which you have. Abu Bakr said: What happened concerning me? Ali said: By God, I did not know but good. Ali took the written message and went on, and Abu Bakr and Omar went back to Medina and said: Messenger of God, what happened to us? He said nothing but good, but I am told: No one should deliver for you but you, or a man from you.”²

Al-Nisa-i in his book “Al-Khasa-is Al-Alaweyah” (Distinctions of Ali) reported that the Messenger of God sent the chapter of Bara-ah to Mecca with Abu Bakr. Then he ordered Ali to follow him. He told him: Take the written message from Abu Bakr and go to the people of Mecca. Ali reached Abu Bakr and took the message from him. Abu Bakr sadly went back and said to the Messenger: Did any Revelation come down concerning me? The Prophet said: No, but I am commanded that either I should deliver it, or a man from the members of my House.³

Al-Termathi recorded through his channel to Anas Ibn Malik that Anas reported: The Prophet sent Bara-ah with Abu Bakr, then he called him and said: No one ought to deliver this except a man from the members of my House. He called Ali and gave him the chapter.”⁴

Ibn Husham in his Biography of the Prophet recorded that Mohammad Al-Baqir reported the following:

“When Bara-ah was revealed to the Messenger, he sent Abu Bakr to lead the people in pilgrimage. The Prophet was told: Messenger of God, it would be good if you send Bara-ah with Abu Bakr so that he will announce it. The Prophet said: No one should deliver for me but a man

2. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 51.

3. Al-Nisa-i *Al-Khasa-iss Al-Alaweyah* (The Distinctions of Ali), p. 20.

4. Al-Termathi, his authentic *Sunan*, part 2, p. 183. (Al-Fairuzabadi, *Fadha-il Al-Khamsah*, part 2, p. 343, conveyed it.)

from the members of my House. Then he called upon Ali Ibn Abu Talib and said to him: Take the verses at the beginning of Bara-ah . . . Ali went on, riding the camel of the Messenger, "Al-Adba," until he reached Abu Bakr on the road. Abu Bakr said: Are you a commander or commanded? Ali said: I am commanded, and they went on and Abu Bakr led the people in the Hajj, Pilgrimage . . . When the Day of Arafat came, Ali stood up and announced to the people what the Messenger ordered him to announce . . ."⁵

It seems that this event was well known. Omar did not deny it when Ibn Abbas reminded him of it. Ibn Abbas reported the following:

" . . . Omar said to me: Ibn Abbas, I see your man (Ali) is treated unjustly . . . I said: Ameer Al-Mumineen, give him his right. He pulled his hand from my hand and went on speaking to himself, then he stood waiting for me. When I came to him; he said: Ibn Abbas, I think they (the Qureshites) did not give him the leadership only because they thought he was too young for that . . . I said: By God, neither God nor His Messenger considered him too young when they ordered him to take the chapter of Bara-ah from your man. He (Omar) turned his face away from me and sped up and I went back."⁶

Al-Hafith Al-Kanji Al-Shafi-i in his book *Kifayat Al-Talib*, page 151, recorded that Al-Harith Ibn Malik reported the following:

"I came to Mecca and met Saad Ibn Abu Waqas, I asked him: "Did you hear any recommendation for Ali?" He said: I witnessed four for him, if one of them were for me, I would prefer it to having the whole world, living in it as long as Noah lived. The Messenger sent Abu Bakr with Bara-ah to the pagans of Quraish. He traveled a day and night, then the Prophet said to Ali: Follow Abu Bakr, take

5. Ibn Husham, *Al-Seerah Al-Nabaweyah* (Biography of the Prophet), part 2, p. 547.

6. Ibn Abu Al-Hadeed in his *Commentary on Nahjul-Balagha*, part 3, p. 105.

Bara-ah from him, and deliver it, and send Abu Bakr back to me. Abu Bakr came back crying. He said: Messenger of God, did any revelation come down concerning me? The Prophet said: None but good. No one should deliver for me except myself or a man from me, or he said: from the members of my House . . . ”

Whether the Messenger sent Abu Bakr with the chapter of Bara-ah, or the chapter came down after he left for the pilgrimage; and whether Abu Bakr went back to the Prophet or he continued in his leadership of the pilgrimage, these hadiths unanimously agree that the Messenger declared that no one should deliver for him (or perform for him) but a man from him or a man from the members of his House (and the first two hadiths and the hadith of Ibn Abbas stated that this was by order from God.) That man was Ali Ibn Abu Talib.

Let us try to understand what the Messenger meant by his saying “No one should deliver for me except a man from me (or from the members of my House).”

The Holy Prophet did not mean that no one should report his word or deed except a man from the members of his House; otherwise, it would be forbidden for people from outside his House to report what he said or did, and this is untrue. The Messenger used to say: “Let the present inform the absent.”

Nor did the Messenger mean that he should not send a messenger to people except a man from his House, because he sent many messengers to kings and princes and tribes and individuals, and none of them were from the members of his House.

The rest of the people can report the words and the deeds of the Holy Prophet. But what they report would not be securely free of error. Many times the reporters themselves became confused and they contradicted each other in their reports. Therefore, none of them would be an authority to the Muslims in representing the Messenger

7. Al-Hafith Al-Kanji, *Kifayat Al-Talib*, p. 151 (conveyed by Al-Ameeni, *Al-Ghadeer*, part 1, p. 40.)

and in replacing him as the communicator of the Islamic instructions. The one who represents the Holy Prophet is a man from the members of his House.

The one who delivers for the Messenger and represents him should be the treasurer of the Knowledge of the Messenger, knowing all of what was revealed to the Messenger and what the Messenger gave of instructions.

This is exactly what the Messenger meant when he said: "I am the city of knowledge and Ali is the gate of that city. Whoever wants to enter that city, should come through the gate."

The Messenger informed us that the members of his House during his lifetime were only four: Ali, Fatima, and their two children (Al-Hassan, and Al-Hussein). We have mentioned in the second chapter, vol. 1 of this book, several hadiths which indicate this. Of those hadiths is what Muslim reported through Saad Ibn Waqas: When this verse, 'Let us invite our sons and your sons . . . ,' the Messenger called Ali, Fatima, and Hassan and Hussein, and said: God, these are the members of my House."⁸

No man was among these four during the time of the Holy Prophet except one person: That is Ali Ibn Abu Talib. Al-Hassan and Al-Hussein were still children and Fatima was a grown lady. Thus, when the Messenger said: "No one performs for me except a man from the members of my House," he had meant only Ali. Therefore, he sent him with the chapter of Bara-ah.

The Messenger did not mean to bestow on Ali this office of his representation because he was from his relatives. The Prophet would not elevate his relatives above other people because they are his relatives. He is the one who called upon people to erase all tribal prejudices, and declared the human equality and that there is no superiority but through righteousness. And so the hadith of Ibn Abbas speaks clearly that what the Prophet did was by order from God, and not through a human desire. The Almighty, of course, would prefer Ali to the rest of the peo-

8. Muslim, in his *Sahih*, part 15, p. 176.

ple only because He purified him and the rest of the members of the House completely.

The quoted hadiths indicate that Ali was the only deputy of the Messenger, and no one from the Muslims represents the Messenger except he. It is reported that Hubshi Ibn Janadah reported the following:

“I heard the Messenger of God saying: Ali is from me and I am from him, and no one represents me except Ali.” Al-Termathī in his authentic *Sunan* reported this hadith and said this is good, unusual, and authentic.⁹ Ibn Majah reported it also in his authentic *Sunan*,¹⁰ and so did Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad*.¹¹

Ali’s general representation of the Holy Prophet stands clearly in the hadiths which declared that obedience of Ali is an obedience of God and His Messenger; disobedience of Ali is a disobedience of God and His Messenger; to slander him is to slander God and His Messenger; to love him is to love God and His Messenger, and to be hostile to him is to be hostile to God and His Messenger. Al-Hakim in his *Mustadrak* recorded that Abu Tharr reported the following:

“The Messenger of God said: ‘Whoever obeys me obeys God, and whoever disobeys me disobeys God; and whoever obeys Ali obeys me; and whoever disobeys Ali disobeys me.’” Al-Hakim said: “This is an authentic hadith.¹² But the two sheikhs Al-Bukhari and Muslim did not report it.” Al-Thahabi in his comment on Al-*Mustadrak* considered this hadith authentic.¹²

Al-Hakim in his *Mustadrak* also reported on the same page, many hadiths which indicate that to slander Ali is to slander the Messenger and to love him is to love the Messenger, and to be hostile to him is to be hostile to the Messenger.

9. Al-Termathī, part 5, his authentic *Sunan*, p. 300.

10. Ibn Majah, his authentic *Sunan*, part 1, hadith no. 145.

11. Imam Ahmad, *Al-Munad*, part 4, pp. 164-165.

12. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 121.

It could be argued that the hadiths of representation and delivery substantiate that Ali is the Imam of the Muslims in jurisprudence rather than worldly affairs. It does not substantiate his leadership in rule and administration. Therefore, they do not prove that he is the first caliph of the Messenger.

The weakness of this argument is easy to discover when we remember that the hadiths which indicate the imperativeness of his obedience and the prohibition of his disobedience actually announce his leadership in jurisprudence and worldly affairs. In addition to this, the separation between religion and worldly affairs has no place in Islam.

Summary of the Previous Four Chapters

It has become clear by now that what was supposed to happen had happened. The Messenger had done what was dictated by the nature of his mission and the principles of his religion, along with the grave circumstances under which his nation and state was living. He responded to all that and to the need of the Muslims for a genuine authority in the Islamic teaching by appointing a genuine Imam for the nation to lead it after him. This is what was expected, and this is what took place. The Holy Prophet informed the Muslims in many ways that he chose for them a man to lead them after him.

We have mentioned until now four kinds of statements by the Holy Prophet through which he informed the Muslims that Ali is their Imam. He made him their authority when he made him the gate of the city of knowledge and told them whoever wants to enter into that city has to come through the gate. He informed them also on the day of the Home Conference that Ali is his brother, his minister, his executor, and his successor.

He also informed them on many occasions that Ali to him is like Aaron to Moses in everything except the prophethood. He informed them that God commanded him that no one should represent him but Ali. He informed them

that their obedience to Ali is an obedience to God and His Messenger and that their disobedience to Ali is a disobedience to God and His Messenger.

The Hadith Is a Prophecy

The Prophet uttered these important statements in reliance on the Divine revelation. Otherwise, he could not declare that obedience to Ali is an obedience to God and his disobedience is a disobedience to God. He could declare that only if God informed him through a clear revelation that Ali will never in his future life disagree with the command of God and the teachings of His Prophet. The declaration itself implies a very clear prophecy, and it is clear that that prophecy had been realized. The Imam lived after the Messenger about thirty years in which he was a miniature copy of the great Messenger. He followed his way one hundred per cent and never parted with the order of God and the Prophet's instructions.

The event of the chapter of Bara-ah took place during the days of pilgrimage, the ninth year after the Hijra. We shall see that the Messenger during the tenth year after the Hijrah and at the time of his valedictory pilgrimage issued statements which took the shape of general declaration in the presence of thousands of pilgrims. Those statements were directed to the Muslims of every generation. This was on and before the Day of Ghadeer Khum.

To try to understand what the Messenger meant in those statements, I shall divide these statements into two sections, though the two sections were very often put together in one statement. These two sections are the Hadith Al-Thaqalain and Hadith Al-Wilayah.

Hadith Al-Thaqalain (The Two Valuables)

Many of the Hadiths of Al-Thaqalain (the Two Valuables) have been already put in front of the reader (in the second chapter and other places in this book).

To make it easy for the reader, it would be proper to repeat what I have recorded of these hadiths before, and add to them others of their kind.

Imam Abu Easa Ibn Easa Al-Thermathi in his authentic *Sunan* recorded that Jabir Ibn Abdullah (Al-Ansari) reported:

“I witnessed the Messenger of God in his pilgrimage (in the tenth year after the Hijrah) speaking while he was riding his camel called: Al-Qaswa. I heard him saying: ‘O people, I have left in you that which if you adhere to, you will never go astray: The Book of God, and the members of my House.’”¹

Ibn Jareer, Ibn Asim, Al-Mahamili in his *Amali* and Ibn Rahawaih recorded that Ali reported that the Messenger of God said: “Whoever God and His Messenger are his “Moula” (Guardian), this Ali is his Moula. I have left in you what if you adhere to, you will never go astray: the Book of God, His robe in His hand and in your hands, and the members of my House.”²

1. Al-Termathi, his authentic *Sunan*, part 5, p. 328.

2. Al-Muttaqi recorded this in *Kanz Al-Ummal*, part 5, p. 23 (hadith no. 356).

Al-Termathi recorded that Zeid Ibn Arqam reported that the Messenger of God said: "I am leaving in you what if you follow, you will never stray after me. One of them is bigger than the other. The Book of God, a robe extended from Heaven to earth, and the members of my House. They will never part with each other until they join me at the basin (on the Day of Judgment). Beware how you shall treat them after me."³

Al-Termathi said: "There are hadiths on this subject by Abu Tharr, Abu Sa-eed, Zeid Ibn Arqam, and Huthaifah Ibn Oseid . . ."⁴ Al-Hakim recorded that Zeid Ibn Arqam reported:

"When the Messenger of God was coming from the Valedictory Pilgrimage, he stood at Ghadeer Khum . . . and said: I am about to be summoned (by God) and I will respond (to His call). I am leaving in you the Two Valuables: One of them is bigger than the other: the Book of God, and the members of my House. Beware how you shall treat them after me, for they shall not part from each other until they join me at the basin (on the Day of Judgment) . . ."⁵

Al-Hakim recorded also that Zeid Ibn Arqam said that the Prophet said on that day: "O people, I am leaving in you two elements if you follow you shall not go astray. They are the Book of God and the members of my House."⁶

Muslim in his Sahih reported that Zeid Ibn Arqam said: "The Messenger of God stood at Ghadeer Khum (between Mecca and Medina), delivering to us a sermon. He praised the Almighty and preached and reminded us. Then he said: 'O people, I am only human, the Messenger of my Lord is about to come to me, and I shall respond. I

3. Al-Termathi, his authentic *Sunan*, part 5, p. 329 (hadith no. 387b).

4. Al-Termathi, his authentic *Sunan*, part 5, p. 329 (hadith no. 387b).

5. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 109.

6. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 109.

am leaving in you “Al-Thaqalain” (The Two Valuables). The first of the two is the Book of God. The guidance and the light are in it. Follow it and adhere to it. He urged people to follow the Book of God and induced them to do so. Then he said: “And members of my House. Remember God in dealing with the members of my House. (Repeating this three times.)”

Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad* reported that Zeid Ibn Thabit reported that the Messenger of God said: “I am leaving in you two caliphs: The Book of God, and the members of my House. Beware how you shall treat them after me, for they will never part with each other until they join me at the Basin (on the Day of Judgment).”⁸

Al-Samhudi Al-Shafi-i in his book *Jawahir Al-Iqdain* (according to Yanabee-a Al-Mawaddah, page 40) reported that Om Selemah (wife of the Messenger) said: “The Messenger of God held the hand of Ali at Ghadeer Khum and lifted it . . . Then he said: ‘Whoever I am his “Moula” Ali is his “Moula”’. Then he said: ‘O people, I am leaving in you the Two Valuables: The Book of God, and the members of my House. They will never part with each other until they join me at the Basin (on the Day of Judgment).’”⁹

Imam Ahmad recorded that Abu Sa-eed Al-Khidri reported that the Messenger of God said:

“I am about to be summoned by God and I shall respond. I am leaving in you the Two Valuables: The Book of God and the members of my House. The Almighty informed me that they will never part with each other until they join me at the Basin (on the Day of Judgment). Beware how you shall treat them after me.”¹⁰

7. Muslim his *Sahih*, part 15, p. 180. Imam Ahmad also reported it in his *Musnad*, part 4, p.367.

8. Imam Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*, part 5, p. 181.

9. Al-Ameeni conveyed it in his book *Al-Ghadeer*, part 2, p. 17.

10. Imam Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*, part 3, p. 17.

Ibn Kuthayer, in his book “Al-Bidayah and Al-Nihayah” (part 5, page 209, and part 7, page 348) recorded that Huthaifah Ibn Osaid reported that the Messenger of God said:

“And I shall question you when you join me on the Day of Judgment about The Two Valuables. Beware how you shall treat them after me: The bigger Valuable is the Book of God, a robe whose end is in the hand of God and the other end is in your hands. Hold it firmly. Do not go astray and do not deviate. The smaller Valuable is the members of my House. The Almighty informed me that they will not part with each other until they join me at the Basin (on the Day of Judgment).” Ibn Asakir reported this hadith through Huthaifa Ibn Ossaid.

We have mentioned that Al-Termathi said in his Sahih that Hutheifah Ibn Ossaid is one of the reporters of this hadith.

The hadith of Al-Thaqalain (The Two Valuables) was reported by many companions. Therefore, it is considered by many scholars to be of the “Mutawatir” (a hadith conveyed by numerous reporters) kind or at least from the well known hadiths.

Of the Two Valuables’ hadiths is the hadith of the safety. Al-Hakim recorded that Abu Tharr said while he was holding the door of the Kaaba:

“Whoever knows me, I am the one whom he knows, and whoever does not know me, I am Abu Tharr. I heard the Prophet saying: The position of the members of my House among you is the position of Noah’s ark and his people. Whoever embarked on it was saved, and whoever failed to embark on it was drowned.”¹²

Al-Khateeb in his history, part 12, page 91, reported similar to this hadith through Anas Ibn Malik. Al-Bazzaz also reported it through Ibn Abbas, and Ibn Al-Zubeir reported similar to it. Ibn Jareer through Abu Tharr and Abu Sa-eed Al-Khidri also reported similar to it. Abu Na-

12. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 151.

eem, Ibn Abdul-Barr, Muhibb Al-Deen Al-Tabari and many others reported this hadith.¹³

This hadith tells us what the hadiths of “Al-Thaqalain” (The Two Valuables) told us. The two hadiths actually are declaring to the nation that security against straying cannot be obtained but through the adherence to the teaching of the Holy Qur’an and leadership of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet Mohammad.

Prophetic Hadith

The Hadiths of the Two Valuables and of the Safety tell us clearly that the Messenger did not leave this nation without leadership after him. He declared to the Muslims that the leadership of the nation is in the members of his House, and that the adherence to the Holy Qur’an and to their teaching is a security against straying. There is no doubt that the adherence to the Holy Qur’an is the imperative duty of every Muslim. And so is the adherence to the teaching of the members of the House of the Prophet and walking in their path.

The most important duty of the nation is to secure itself against straying. And when the adherence to the leadership of the members of the House of the Prophet is a security against straying, it would be the duty of the nation to follow them. These hadiths declare clearly that when the Holy Prophet chose the members of his House for the leadership of the nation, he did not do it by a human motive but through the revelation of God who chose these members for the leadership of the nation. The Messenger says that the Book and the members of his House will never part with each other, and that the Almighty informed him that the Qur’an and they will never part with each other, until they join him at the Basin (on the Day of Judgment).

It is worthy to mention that these hadiths contain a

13. Al-Khateeb, *History of Baghdad*, part 12, p. 91 (conveyed by Al-Ameeni, *Al-Ghadeer*, part 2, p. 301).

clear Prophecy. The Holy Prophet was not able humanly to know that the members of his House will never part with the Holy Qur'an, particularly when two of the members of the House, Al-Hassan and Al-Hussein, were still small children. No one could foretell the way the two children would develop later on. The hadiths actually include all the members of the "Itrah" (the chosen relatives of the Prophet), who were born after the death of the Prophet, such as the Imams: Ali, son of Al-Hussein, Mohammad Al-Baqir, Jaafar Al-Sadiq, and the Imams from the progeny of Al-Sadiq.

This prophecy was fulfilled completely. Each one of these Imams was an example of purity, knowledge, and righteousness. None of them departed from the Holy Qur'an for one day.

It appeared to many scholars that the hadiths of the Two Valuables contradict the hadith which advises the Muslims to follow the Book of God and the "Sunnah" (the instructions of His Prophet), which we have already discussed (in chapter 33). There we have mentioned that Ibn Husham reported in his book, *Biography of the Prophet*, and Malik reported in his *Muwatta*, that the Messenger said in his sermon at the Valedictory Pilgrimage:

" . . . O people, understand my word, for I have delivered the Message. I have left for you what if you fortify yourselves with, you will never go astray, a clear instruction: The Book of God, and 'Sunnah' of His Prophet . . ."

It is worthy to note that this hadith was attributed to the Holy Prophet without mentioning the names of the reporters through whom Ibn Husham and Malik received the hadith.

The hadith was reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim, without mentioning the word "Sunnah." They mentioned only the word "Kitabullah" (the Book of God). (See Sahih of Muslim in the Book of Pilgrimage, part 8, in the Valedictory Pilgrimage, page 184 and also the Sahih of Al-Bukhari, part 5, page 224.)

However, let us assume that this hadith is authentic, and let us try to understand its meaning. To facilitate the discussion, let us call hadith "Al-Thaqalain," "The Two Valuables" (which speaks of the Book of God and the members of the House of the Prophet) Hadith no. 1, and call the Hadith of Fortification (which speaks of the Book of God and the "Sunnah" of the Prophet) hadith no. 2.

It appeared to many scholars that the Messenger's order to his followers in hadith no. 2 to fortify themselves by the Book and the "Sunnah" against deviation contradicts hadith no. 1, which orders the Muslims to follow the Book and the members of the House of the Holy Prophet as a security against deviation and straying. The fact is that the two hadiths are not contradictory to each other. They are rather complementary to each other.

I have mentioned in chapter 3 that the word "Sunnah" in hadith no. 2 meant what is known to be the instructions of the Holy Prophet with certainty. The hadith also tells us that the Prophet wanted us to follow the known meaning of the Holy Qur'an, rather than its surmised meaning without certainty. This is because the adherence to the uncertain meaning of the Book or the unknown instructions does not represent security against deviation and straying.

Many of the recorded hadiths contradict each other. When each group of scholars takes what it thinks to be authentic and the opinions of the groups differ about the authenticity and the indications of the contradictory hadiths, it would become impossible for all those groups to be right. Some of them or all of them have to be wrong. Thus, there would be no security against straying. Even when there are no contradictions (as when we have only one hadith but that hadith is not certain because it is not reported by a sufficient number of reporters), the hadith would not represent security against straying. That is because it may not have been said by the Holy Prophet, and it is a well known fact that most of the hadiths are from this kind.

The Qur'anic verses are not alike. Some of them can be

understood clearly and certainly, and some of them are not so clear. Therefore, the Qur'anic commentators offered various interpretations to such verses, but none of those interpretations are certain.

Thus, we find that the advocates of pre-destination cite for their opinion some of the Qur'anic verses, and the advocates of man's freedom also cite verses from the Holy Qur'an. The various Islamic Schools of thought argue with each other, disagree with each other, and each one of them cites for its opinion what appears to agree with it of Qur'anic verses or hadiths of the Prophet. All these schools seem to be sincere in what they advocate; but with all their sincerity, they differed from each other, and the truth became unknown. They cannot all be right. Many of them must be wrong. Yet, the Holy Prophet tells us that if we follow the Book of God and his "Sunnah," we would be immuned of error and deviation. But the security is still missing.

All these problems arise if the Messenger had commanded us to follow what we guess to be his "Sunnah" and what we guess to be the meaning of the Book.

If the Messenger had commanded us to follow what is certain to be his "Sunnah" and what is certain to be the meaning of the Holy Qur'an (and this is actually what constitutes a security against deviation and error), he would have commanded us to do what is beyond our ability. The reason: He did not leave us written or sufficient number of known "Sunnahs." What are known to be truly the "Sunnah" of the Prophet are very few.

Yet, we know that the Messenger does not command us to do what is impossible. Therefore, we infer that the Messenger had left his nation a clear way for knowing the real instructions of the Holy Prophet and the meanings of the Book of God.

This way is the members of his House who are one of the Two Valuables whom he left to the nation. This is what hadith no. 1 speaks of. Should this be the case, then hadith no. 2 would not be in conflict with hadith no. 1. This hadith would be rather supplementing and explaining

hadith no. 2, and hadith no. 2 would be commanding us to do what is within our power. For hadith no. 1 declared to the nation that the members of the House of the Prophet are sources of the certain knowledge concerning the actual instructions of the Holy Prophet and the meaning of the Holy Book. The nation through the members of the House of the Holy Prophet can acquire what it needs of knowledge concerning the Islamic principles and laws if it desires that, and this is what secures it against straying.

This is actually what the Holy Prophet declared when he said: "I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate. Whoever wants to enter the city, should come to the gate." Thus, the words of the Holy Messenger on this subject agree with each other, and points to one road and aim, namely: The duty of the nation is to follow the members of the House of the Holy Prophet who were the treasurers of the Prophet's knowledge. Thus, the Muslim generations who were living during the first three Islamic centuries with members of the House of the Prophet were able to learn from them the exact meaning of the Qur'an and the genuine "Sunnah" of the Prophet.

Sheikh Mohammad Abu Zuhrah in his book "Al-Imam Al-Sadiq," after mentioning hadith no. 1 and hadith no. 2 said the following:

"But we say that the Sunni books which reported the hadiths and recorded the word "Sunnati" (my instructions) are more reliable than the Sunni books which recorded the word: "Itrati" (members of my House)."¹⁴

ABU ZUHRAH'S ARGUMENT AGAINST HADITH NO. 1

Sheikh Abu Zuhrah said that, though hadith no. 2 is recorded without naming the reporters who attributed it to the Messenger. On the other hand, hadith no. 1 was re-

14. Sheikh Mohammad Abu Zuhrah, *Al-Imam Al-Sadiq*, pp. 199-200.

ported by numerous companions of the Prophet. It is considered "Mutawater" and for this it is certainly authentic. I have mentioned before that Muslim reported in the eighth part of his *Sahih* that the Messenger said in the Valedictory Pilgrimage:

"And I have left for you what you will not go astray if you fortify yourselves with: The book of God, and you shall be questioned about it."¹⁵ He did not mention the word "Sunnati." Al-Bukhari also mentioned the Book of God, but he did not mention the word "Sunnati."¹⁶

Sheikh Abu Zuhra is a sample of other scholars who find it difficult to accept hadith no. 1 in spite of being reported through numerous channels which made it certainly authentic. The fear of these scholars which prevents them from accepting hadith no. 1 is due to two reasons:

1. This hadith indicates clearly that the Messenger wanted the caliphate to be in the members of his House, and this is what these scholars do not like to believe.

2. These scholars thought that there is a conflict between hadith no. 1 and hadith no. 2, and this was their great error.

They did not pay attention to the fact that when the Messenger commands the Muslims to follow the "Sunnah" (his instructions) while the "Sunnah" is not recorded, he would be commanding the Muslims to do the impossible if he wanted them to follow with certainty. Under this condition, our adherence to the known and unrecorded "Sunnah" would be possible only if the Prophet had appointed an Imam after him to inform people about what they do not know. And this is what hadith no. 1 is about.

The Prophet, however, would not tell the Muslims that if they follow what they guessed to be his instructions, they would be secured against deviation, because guessing

15. Muslim, his *Sahih*, part 8, Book of Pilgrimage, (Valedictory Pilgrimage), p. 184.

16. Al-Bukhari, his *Sahih*, part 5, p. 224.

does not secure the truth. The Holy Qur'an declares: "Certainly conjecture never substitutes the truth." (Chapter 53, v. 28)

Sheikh Abu Zuhrah was actually unconscious of his own doing when he was writing about the subject. He viewed that hadith no. 2 is more authentic than hadith no. 1, because the books which recorded the word "Wa Sunnati" are more reliable than the books that recorded the word "Wa Itrati."

Abu Zuhrah's claim is untrue because hadith no. 1 was reported by numerous companions and recorded in highly authentic books such as the authentic Sunnan of Al-Termath and Al-Mustadrak by Al-Hakim (who along with Al-Thahabi stated that the hadith is authentic.) However, I should not fail to draw the attention of the reader to a contradiction in which Abu Zuhrah fell inadvertently.

Hadith no. 2 states clearly that the adherence to the book and the "Sunnah" of the Prophet is a security against straying. If Abu Zuhrah understands from the word "Sunnati" (my Sunnah) the instructions which were attributed by the hadiths to the Holy Prophet without certainty, these instructions would not be a security against straying in the subject of his argument. For he fights one hadith by another hadith. Each of the two hadiths, which he views as contradictory to each other, can be taken by a Muslim School as evidence on what the followers of that School believe. One of the two Schools would be necessarily erroneous if the two hadiths are contradictory to each other and both hadiths are "Sunnah." Thus, the security which hadith no. 2 promised is clearly missing.

Abu Zuhrah was erroneous when he, like the rest of the scholars of his School, did not view in hadith no. 1 a necessary supplement of hadith no. 2 if hadith no. 2 is authentic. This is because hadith no. 2 can be logical only if the Holy Prophet had appointed for the nation an Imam as a reliable authority for teaching the "Sunnah" of the Holy Prophet, and this is what hadith no. 1 is saying. Through this hadith the Holy Prophet informed the

Muslims of the means through which they can acquire true knowledge of the meanings of the Book and the actual instructions of the Holy Prophet.

Abu Zuhrah added to his argument against hadith no. 1 other arguments: He said:

“Granted that the hadith is authentic. But we say that this hadith does not stop argument. It does not identify the Imams whom the Shi-ites consider to be the caliphs after the Holy Prophet. The hadith does not specify that the Imams are to be from the children of Al-Hussein, rather than the children of Al-Hassan. The hadith also does not indicate that the leadership would be by inheritance.

“The hadith does not indicate that the Prophet meant political leadership. It actually speaks of the leadership in jurisprudence and knowledge, rather than administrating the affairs of the States. There is not any correlation between the two leaderships.

“The Holy Prophet used to grant leadership to men who were less knowledgeable than some of the men whom they led, only because the appointed leaders had better administrative ability. The Holy Prophet used to appoint some non-jurisprudent individuals for the leadership of Medina during the times of his absence. If leadership requires high knowledge in jurisprudence, this would have to be extended to the commandment of the armies. Yet, we know that the Holy Prophet made Osamah Ibn Zeid the commander of an army in which Abu Bakr and Omar were included, though Osamah did not have the knowledge of the two men.”¹⁷

What Abu Zuhrah offers of arguments can be summarized in three things:

1. Hadith no. 1 does not speak specifically about the individual Imams from the members of the House; nor does it indicate the sequel in their leadership.

17. Sheikh Mohammad Abu Zuhrah, *Al-Imam Al-Sadiq*, pp. 199-200.

This is wrong, because many of the channels of hadith no. 1 spoke specifically of the Imam Ali Ibn Abu Talib and declared him to be the authority after the Messenger and that adherence to his teaching is a security against straying. As he was chosen by the Holy Prophet, he would have the jurisdiction to select his own successor, and his successor can select another successor who would be the most qualified to lead the nation, and so on.

Furthermore, the Holy Prophet announced the names of the members of the House who lived with him. We have mentioned in the second chapter that Saad Ibn Abu Waqass reported that the Holy Prophet on the day of Mubahalah (contesting prayer) said: "God, these (Ali, Fatimah, Al-Hassan, and Al-Hussein) are the members of my house."¹⁸ It is also reported that Om Selemah said that the Messenger made a statement similar to this.¹⁹

2. The second argument by Abu Zuhrah against hadith no. 1 is that it does not indicate that the caliphate is by inheritance.

THE SHI-ITES DO NOT BELIEVE IN THE INHERITANCE OF THE CALIPHATE

I agree with Abu Zuhrah that the hadith does not indicate the inheritance of leadership. But the Shi-ite School does not subscribe to the theory of inheritance of leadership. The evidence of this is that the law of inheritance in Islam makes the child rather than the brother the heir. Yet the Shi-ites believe that the Imam after Al-Hassan was his brother Al-Hussein rather than any of his sons. The Shi-ites say that the Islamic leadership is in the members of the House of the Holy Prophet, not because of inheritance, but because the Prophet selected Ali and his two sons for being the most qualified people for leadership. The fourth Imam who was born after the Prophet was to be selected

18. Muslim, his *Sahih*, part 15, p. 176.

19. Imam Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*, part 6, p. 292.

by his father Al-Hussein on the basis of his qualifications rather than the basis of being his child or his first child.

It seems that it was too difficult for Abu Zuhrah and many other scholars of his School to think that the members of the House of the Holy Prophet were more qualified for leadership than the rest of the Muslims. Therefore, they thought that the Shi-ites believe in their leadership because of inheritance.

Abu Zuhrah's rejection of hadith no. 1, in spite of its numerous reporters, is probably due to this error. He could not believe that the members of that righteous family were more qualified than others; therefore, he thought that the hadith meant inheritance of leadership. He failed to pay attention to the reason which the Holy Prophet clearly declared, stating that the Almighty informed him that the members of his House will not part with the Holy Qur'an until they join him at the Basin (on the Day of Judgment).

Had Abu Zuhrah paid attention to a number of verses from the third chapter of the Holy Qur'an, he could have been able to understand the distinctions and high qualifications of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet. In that chapter, we read the following verses:

“Certainly God has chosen Adam and Noah, the family of Abraham, and the family of Imran above all people. Offsprings, one is from the other. And God hears and knows all things.”²⁰

In the same chapter, we read the following:

“There did Zakariya pray to his Lord, saying: O my Lord, grant unto me from Thee a progeny that is pure; for Thou art He that hears prayer. While he was standing in prayer in the chamber, the angels called unto him: God does give thee glad tidings of Yehya, witnessing the truth of a word from God, and he will

20. The Holy Qur'an, chapter 3, verses: 33-34.

be (besides) noble, chaste and a Prophet, of the goodly (company of the righteous).”²¹

And so many other verses in this chapter and other chapters indicate that the Almighty created from the progenies of Prophets and their relatives individuals who were of the highest among people in knowledge and obedience to God. Therefore, He chose them above others. This was a reward to those Prophets for their efforts in leading people, or it was in response to the prayers of those prophets as the above verses indicate, because they contain the phrase “For Thou art the Hearer and the Knower of all things,” or “Thou art He that hears prayer.”

Mohammad is the final of the prophets and most outstanding among them. He is also most deserving of the Divine reward for his unique efforts in leading mankind to the right road, and he is the most deserving to have his prayer answered.

The Holy Prophet repeatedly prayed to the Almighty to purify the members of his House. Om Selemah, wife of the Messenger, reported that when the following verse, “Certainly God wants only to remove all abominations from you, ye members of the House, and to make you pure and spotless” was revealed and Ali, Fatima, Hassan, and Hussein were with him, he took the surplus of his cloak and covered them with it. Then he stuck his hand out and turned it towards the sky and said: “God, these are the members of my House and the closest to me. I ask Thee to remove all abomination from them, and to make them pure and spotless . . .”²²

He also prayed for the members of his House in his daily prayers, and he taught the Muslims to say when they pray for him: “God, I ask Thee to honor Mohammad and the members of his House as Thou have honored the

21. The Holy Qur’an, chapter 3, verses: 38-39.

22. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 128.

members of the House of Abraham. Certainly Thou art The Praised, the Glorious.”²³

Al-Hakim recorded that Abdullah Ibn Jaafar Ibn Abu Talib reported that his father said:

“When the Messenger of God witnessed the mercy of God coming down, he said: ‘Call for me, call for me.’ Safiyah said: ‘Whom should we call for you, Messenger of God?’ He said: ‘Members of my House: Ali, Fatima, Hassan and Hussein.’ They were brought to him. He then covered them with his garment, then raised his two hands, and said: ‘God, these are the members of my House. I ask Thee to honor Mohammad and the members of the House of Mohammad.’ God revealed the following verse:

‘Certainly, God wants to remove the abomination from you, members of the House, and to purify you and make you spotless.’²⁴

Al-Hakim said: “This is an authentic hadith.”²⁵

THE SUNNIS ARE CLOSER THAN THE SHI-ITES TO THE OPINION OF LEADERSHIP BY INHERITANCE

What the aforementioned substantiates is that the followers of the House of the Prophet do not believe in the leadership of its members because of inheritance as Abu Zuhrah and other scholars from his school thought. They rather believe in their leadership because the Prophet chose them. He did that because of what they had of distinctions in righteousness, knowledge, purity, and wisdom, and because they do not part with the Holy Qur’an in deed or word.

I have mentioned in the sixteenth chapter that the Sunnite School advocates, though inadvertently, the idea of caliphate by inheritance. They reported many authentic

23. Al-Bukhari, his *Sahih*, part 6, p. 101, and Muslim in his *Sahih*, part 4, p. 136.

24. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 128.

25. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 128.

hadiths which indicate that the caliphs are only Qureshites and that the caliphs are only twelve and that the caliphate shall stay in Quraish as long as two persons live on this earth.

When the Messenger made Qureshiteness a requirement in caliphate, he did that by a commandment from God. If this requirement were made only because the Qureshites were related closely or remotely to the Messenger (because the Messenger and all the Qureshites are descendants of one great-grandfather: Fihir Ibn Malik), this would be an advocacy of the idea of caliphate by inheritance. Such an extremely extended inheritance cannot be supported by the Islamic Law of inheritance which makes the close relatives bar the remote ones.

Should Qureshiteness be made a requirement by God, not because of relation to the Holy Prophet, but only because being from Quraish is a distinction by itself, this would be an invitation to a belief in a tribal superiority and aristocracy alien to the teachings of the Faith of Islam. The Faith of Islam invites us to believe in equality among the Muslims regardless of family, nationality, race, or regional relationship and declares that the noblest in the eyes of God is the most righteous.

Since the two interpretations are not logical, it would be necessary to understand the hadiths as follows:

The Almighty made the caliphate in Quraish because He knew that there were or shall be among the Qureshites twelve men, superior in knowledge, righteousness, and other qualifications for leadership. He made these twelve men caliphs whether they come to power or people prevent them from coming to power. The twelve men are caliphs not because they are related to the Messenger closely; nor because they are Qureshites, though it happened that they were from Quraish and close relatives to the Messenger.

The Holy Prophet himself was chosen by God, not because he was from Quraish or from the Hashimites, though it happened that he was from Quraish and a Hashimite. He was chosen because of his personal

qualifications, and he was the Prophet even if people did not believe in his prophethood.

If this is what was meant by the hadiths which made Qureshiteness a requirement in the caliphate, this would not be an advocacy of leadership by inheritance. This logical interpretation agrees only with the Shi-ite School. The Sunnite scholars do not agree with this interpretation. They are rather inclined to agree with the first or the second interpretation. Yet, the first interpretation means caliphate by inheritance which the Sunnites deny and attribute it to the Shi-ites, though the Shi-ites are clear of it. The second interpretation, as you have already seen, is opposed to the Islamic principles.

POLITICAL AND JURISPRUDENTIAL LEADERSHIP

3. Abu Zuhrah raised a third argument against hadith no. 1. His argument was that the hadith does not indicate that the Prophet meant political leadership of his House. He may have meant only their leadership in jurisprudence and religion. This is invalid for the following reasons:

The intention of the Messenger which he stated in hadith no. 1 was to make the leadership of the members of his House a security against straying. The leadership in jurisprudence does not constitute a security against straying when the power is in other hands. The leadership in jurisprudence cannot usually communicate its instructions and information to all Muslims. Communication of this kind of instruction requires a positive atmosphere which enables the Imam to announce to the nation his instructions, as it requires the power which directs the nation to follow his instructions and believe in their soundness. As long as the power is in the hands of other than the Imam, that positive atmosphere and the facility of directing the nation would be missing.

When the caliphs are other than the Imams whom the Messenger wanted the nation to follow, those caliphs

would be inclined by their human nature to keep the Imams in obscurity. They do not like to publicize their instructions. They may attempt to publicize the opinions and the verdicts of others from their own followers whom they do not consider potential competitors for the authority. They would try to publicize the opinions of individuals of this kind, though they are inferior to the true Imams in knowledge. Al-Abbasi Al-Mansour asked Imam Malik to write a book about the "Sunnahs" of the Prophet, and he promised to publicize that book and make it the main source in the hadiths among the Muslims. He did not ask the Imam Jaafar Al-Sadiq to do that, though Malik was a student of Al-Sadiq.²⁶

The majority of the Muslims took from Abdullah Ibn Mas-ood, Zeid Ibn Thabit, Abdullah Ibn Omar, and Ibn Abbas much more than they took from the Imam Ali Ibn Abu Talib, in spite of the great difference between Ali and these companions in knowledge. Abu Zuhrah himself recorded in his book *Al-Imam Al-Sadiq* the following:

"It would be necessary to say that the jurisprudence of the Imam Ali, his verdicts and his rules as the highest magistrate of the nation, were not reported in the books of the Sunnites in proportion with the times of his caliphate and the time in which he was engaged in the study of the Faith and issuing verdicts during the time of the Three Caliphs before him.

"The life of Imam Ali was dedicated entirely to jurisprudence and the knowledge of religion. He was the closest to the Messenger from among the companions. He accompanied the Messenger while he was a boy before the Messenger was commissioned by God, and he continued with him until God summoned His Messenger to Himself. Therefore, it was expected that the books of the Sunnites contain much more than it contained of Ali's teaching.

"If we want to know the reason for which the instructions and the reports of the Imam Ali disappeared and remained unknown to most of the Muslims, we say that the

26. Abu Zuhrah, *Al-Imam Al-Sadiq*, p. 27.

Omayyad authority was behind the disappearance of Ali's jurisprudence and rules. It would be improbable that the Omayyads would curse the Imam Ali on the pulpits of the Muslims, then allow the scholars to report his knowledge, his verdicts and his instructions to the people, especially in matters which deal with the basis of the Islamic rule."²⁷

Any reader of the books of the hadiths of the Sunnites can see clearly that what those books contained of the reports of Abu Hurairah and others like him is incomparably more numerous than what is reported or recorded for Ali and the rest of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet. Yet, Abu Hurairah embraced Islam in the 6th year after the Hijrah while Ali was with the Messenger before the Messenger was commissioned by God until the hour of his death.

In spite of all that and in spite of the fact that the Messenger said that he is the city of knowledge and that Ali is the gate of that city and that whoever wants to enter the city should come to the gate, we find the majority of the Muslims did not come to the gate very often. They took other sources of information about the Islamic teaching and left the gate of the city of knowledge out.

Thus, Abu Zuhrah acknowledged the rarity of what was recorded in the books of the Sunnites from the knowledge of Ali and that the reason for that was political. As he acknowledged this, he should have inferred from hadith no.1 that it indicates that the Messenger wanted his nation to follow the members of his House not only academically in jurisprudence, but also in political rule.

The Holy Prophet declared to the nation that its adherence to the Holy Qur'an and the members of his House is a security against straying. If he limited the function of the members of his House to the academic function and allows the nation to elect others for the caliphate, he would have destroyed the purpose for which he was speaking in hadith no. 1, namely: The security against straying.

27. Abu Zuhrah, *Al-Imam Al-Sadiq*, p. 162

When people elect a caliph from outside the members of the House, they would see in that caliph their religious and secular ruler whom they should obey, even if his opinion in religion were in disagreement with the way of the members of the House of the Prophet. The elected caliph himself would see that people are duty-bound to obey him. He may think that the Holy Qur'an supports that: "O you who believe, obey God, and obey the Messenger and the people of authority from among you . . ."²⁸

The elected caliphs and the Muslims also may see that the duty of the Imam from the members of the House of the Prophet is to obey that caliph.

Thus, the Messenger would have pushed people to confusion instead of securing them against straying by telling them to follow the members of his House and allowing them to elect and obey a caliph whose words and deeds do not agree with their words and deeds. The Islamic history witnessed a good caliph following the opinion of Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam, the exiled of the Prophet and Kaab Al-Ahbaar (an Arab Jew who adopted Islam), and he did not follow opinions and advices of the Imam Ali Ibn Abu Talib.

The fact is that the interpretation which Abu Zuhrah offered disagrees with the clear and logical meaning of hadith no. 1. The Messenger in this hadith declared clearly that his purpose is the unity of the leadership when he said that the Book of God and the members of his House do not part with each other. He did not want the Muslims to follow the members of his House because they were his relatives but because they will not part with the Holy Qur'an.

The meaning of this is that the leadership of the Holy Qur'an and the members of the House is one, and that they do not disagree with each other. One of them, the members of the House, explains the other (the Holy Qur'an) and informs the Muslims about its actual meaning. For this, the adherence to both of them was the securi-

28. The Holy Qur'an, chapter 4, verse 59.

ty against straying. Had the members of the House been in disagreement with the Holy Qur'an occasionally, their obedience would not be a security against straying. But the Almighty informed the Messenger that the Holy Qur'an and the members of his House would never part with each other.

Thus, the security of the nation against straying, according to the Messenger, is in the unity of the leadership without dualism. Should the Messenger allow the Muslims to elect a leadership which does not agree with the House of the Prophet, the unity of the leadership and the security against straying would not exist because dualism would have replaced the unity.

Before I end the refutation of Abu Zuhrah's arguments, I would like to discuss matters he mentioned, of which are the following:

(1) The Holy Prophet chose to appoint for high positions some individuals who were less knowledgeable than others in jurisprudence. He appointed them because they had administrative capabilities.

(2) He appointed for the leadership of Medina during his absence some individuals who were not known to be jurisprudent.

(3) Should the appointment by the Holy Prophet of some individuals for high positions require a profound knowledge in jurisprudence, it should be extended to the military leadership. Yet, we know that the Holy Prophet appointed Osamah commander of the army that included Abu Bakr and Omar, while Osamah did not have what they had of religious knowledge.

What made Abu Zuhrah say all that is that he forgot that the purpose which the Holy Prophet declared in hadith no. 1 is the security of the Muslims against straying. Had Abu Zuhrah paid attention to this, he would have differentiated between a limited authority, such as succeeding the Prophet in ruling Medina during his absence, or appointing a man to lead an army, and the leadership of the whole nation.

To give the command of an army to a man with a

limited knowledge in religion and to appoint a companion to rule Medina during the absence of the Messenger would not damage the security of the nation against straying, as long as the Prophet is the highest authority in the nation and the army. The Prophet can and would correct the errors of his appointee and bring him back to the right road.

The leadership of the whole nation which the Prophet wanted to be a substantial means of security against straying does not realize his purpose if it is given to a man with a limited knowledge in interpretation of the Holy Qur'an and the instructions of the Holy Prophet. Should such a leader stray, there would be no authority above him to supervise him and bring him back to the right road, because he is the highest authority. If he goes wrong in his opinion, the whole nation goes wrong with him. Should a religious leader advise him to retreat and go back to the right road and he refuses to take his advice, the religious leader regardless of his extensive knowledge, would have no authority over that caliph.

It happened during the caliphate of Othman that Ali and good companions tried to bring him back to the right road and the caliph chose not to listen to their advice. They did not succeed and the nation fell into insane crises whose effect has continued until today.

It would have been expected from Abu Zuhrah to be more prudent than he was. The Messenger informed us that the Almighty informed him that the members of his House would never part with the Holy Qur'an, and that the Holy Qur'an and they represent an indispensable means of security against straying. Bestowing such a high honor on them testifies that they were more gifted than others in knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. If they were so, they would have high administrative capability; otherwise, the Prophet would not have recommended them.

It may be said that the outcome is the same, and that it would not be any different whether the Prophet had appointed members of his House to lead the nation only in jurisprudence or appointed them to lead the nation in ad-

ministration and jurisprudence. For the Muslims did not allow them to come to power and did not follow them as the Holy Prophet wanted.

Our answer to this is that the duty of the Messenger is to leave no excuse for the nation. Had he made the members of his House leaders in jurisprudence only and allowed the nation to elect others as religious and secular leaders, the nation would have a good excuse for not taking its religious information from the House of the Prophet. The confusion and bewilderment would have been caused by the Messenger's permission to the nation to have dual leadership. On the other hand, if he declares to the nation the leadership of his House, the nation will be responsible for its own error. This would be like the refusal of a community to believe in a Messenger sent by God with a clear evidence. God would have done what He is expected to do, and the community would have no excuse.

The indication of hadith no. 1 that the leadership of the House of the Prophet in all religious and worldly affairs does not need much explanation. What Abu Zuhrah offered of interpretation is an obvious attempt to give the hadith other than its meaning and purpose. What the Holy Prophet meant is that the obedience of the nation to the Book of God and the House of the Prophet is commanded by God, and that the Revelation had informed the Prophet that the two important elements will not part with each other. This means that the leadership of his House is like his own leadership in being general, extensive, and clear of any dualism because the members of the House of the Prophet, like the Prophet, never part with the Book of God.

The Faith of Islam does not separate religion from the State. The leadership of the Messenger was not only religious, it was both religious and secular. He was the Prophet and the head of the State, and he had the right to administer the affairs of the Muslims more than they had of right to administer their own affairs.

The Holy Prophet declared that the nation should live

under the leadership of the Holy Qur'an and the members of his House. As the nation has to obey the Qur'an in its religious and worldly affairs, it has to give equal obedience to the members of the House of Prophet.

This concludes the discussion of the Two Valuables. Let us turn our attention to the second part of the Prophet's declaration at Ghadeer Khum, the Hadith of the Wilayah (Authority).

The Hadith of the Wilayah

It is a well known fact in history that the Messenger made his Valedictory Pilgrimage during the tenth year after the Hijrah, and that thousands of Muslims accompanied the Prophet in his pilgrimage.

Another well known event of this pilgrimage is that the Messenger, while on his way back to Medina, stopped thousands of pilgrims at a place called "Ghadeer Khum" (between Mecca and Medina) to declare to them that it is their duty to follow "Al-Thaqalain" (The Two Valuables) who will never part with each other until they join him at the Basin (on the Day of Judgment). He informed them also that Ali, the head of the "Itrah" (the close relatives of the Prophet) is like the Holy Prophet in having more authority over their own affairs and that Ali, like the Messenger, is the guardian of all believers.

The Messenger delivered a sermon on the Day of Ghadeer Khum. The companions remembered only a small part of it. Some of the points which he spoke of remained in the memory of many companions who were in Kufa at a gathering to report what the Messenger of God said on the Day of Ghadeer Khum (this was about 27 years after the event of the Ghadeer.) Although the companions who were residing in Kufa were not very numerous, several of them testified that the Messenger declared on the Day of Ghadeer Khum the leadership of Ali. Abu Al-Tufail (a companion) reported that:

"Ali said to the companions who were at that gathering: I ask you in the name of God, whoever was present on

the Day of Ghadeer Khum to stand up, and no one should stand to say: I was informed or I heard. I only ask a man who directly heard by his own ear and memorized by his heart the words of the Messenger.” Seventeen men, including Khuzeimah Ibn Thabit, Sahl Ibn Saad, Oday Ibn Hatam, Aqabah Ibn Amir, Abu Ayyoub Al-Ansari, Abu Leila (or Abu Yaala), Abu Al-Haitham, Ibn Al-Teihan, and men from Quraish stood up and Ali said to them: Tell us what you heard. They said: “We testify that we came with the Messenger of God from his Valedictory Pilgrimage. When the noon time came, the Messenger of God came out. He ordered that some trees in that place be pruned; a cloth was put above those trees. He called for the prayer, and we came out. He said: What shall you say? We said: You have delivered the Message. He said: God, bear witness, repeating that (three times). Then he said: I am about to be summoned (by God and I shall respond to His call). I shall be questioned and you will be questioned. Then he said:

“Certainly God is my ‘Moula’ (Guardian), and I am the guardian of the believers. Do you not know that I have more authority over you than you have over yourselves? We said: Yes. He said this three times. Then he held your hand, Commander of Believers (the reporting companions were addressing the Imam Ali), and lifted it and said: ‘Whoever I am his Moula (Guardian) this is his ‘Moula’. God, love whoever loves him and be hostile to whoever is hostile to him.’ The Imam Ali said to the testifying companions: You have told the truth, and I am among those who bear witness to that.”¹

Al-Hafith, Mohammad Ibn Abdullah the entitled Al-Hakim Al-Neesabouri in his Mustadrak reported through his channel to Zaid Ibn Arqam that Zaid said:

“When the Messenger of God returned from the

1. Al-Oundouzi, *Yanabi-a-Al-Mawaddah*, p. 42. He recorded that Imam Samhoodi (nor Al-Deen Ali Ibn Abdullah Al-Shafi-i reported that Abu Na-eem in his *Hilyat Al-Ouliyah*) recorded it.

Valedictory Pilgrimage and stopped at Ghadeer Khum, he ordered the Muslims to clean under the trees at that place and said: 'I am as if I were summoned and I responded. I have left in you "Al-Thaqalain," one of them is bigger than the other: The Book of God, and my "Itrah" (the close relatives). Beware how you will treat them after me; for they shall not part with each other until they join me at the Basin (on the Day of Judgment). Then he said: Certainly, God is my Guardian, and I am the Moula (Guardian) of every believer. Then he lifted the hand of Ali and said: Whoever I am his Moula (Guardian), this is his "Wali" (Guardian), God, love whoever loves him, and be hostile to whoever is hostile to him.'"² Al-Hakim through another channel reported that Zaid Ibn Arqam reported that the Prophet said the following:

"... O people, I am leaving in you two elements, you will never go astray if you follow them. They are the Book of God and the members of my House, my 'Itrah.' Then he said: Do you know that I have more authority over the believers than they have over themselves, (repeating that three times)? They said: Yes. The Messenger of God said: Whoever I am his Moula, this Ali is his Moula."³ These hadiths contain three important items:

1. The Messenger left to his nation two important elements which do not part with each other, and that obedience of the two constitutes a security against straying. The two elements are: The Book of God, and the 'Itrah' (close relatives) of the messenger.

2. The Prophet had more authority over the believers than they had over themselves, and that God is the Guardian of the Messenger, and that the Messenger is the Guardian of the believers.

3. Ali is like the Prophet in being Guardian of all the believers. Jabir Ibn Abdullah Al-Ansari, Amir Ibn Dhumrah, Huthaifah Ibn Oseid, Imam Ali, and others reported the three contents in one hadith.

2. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, 109.

3. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, pp. 109-110.

The first and the second contents were also reported by the Imam Ali and Om Selemah, wife of the Messenger who said:

“The Messenger held the hand of Ali at Ghadeer Khum. He raised it until we witnessed the whiteness of his armpit, and said: Whoever I am his Moula Ali is his ‘Moula’. Then he said: ‘O people, I am leaving in you ‘Al-Thaqalain’ (The Two Valuables): ‘Kitabullah’ (the Book of God) and my Itrah (my close relatives). And they will not part with each other until they join me at the Basin (on the Day of Judgment).”⁴

We have already mentioned that Imam Ali reported a hadith similar to this one.

The second and the third contents were reported by a number of companions, including Abu Sa-eed Al-Khidri, Abu Qudamah Al-Arani, Hutheifah Ibn Osaid, Amir Ibn Dhumrah, Zaid Ibn Arqam and Al-Bura Ibn Azib who reported, according to Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad* and Ibn Majah in his authentic *Sunan*, the following:

“We came with the Messenger of God in his Valedictory Pilgrimage, and he stopped at the road and called for a congregational prayer. Then he took the hand of Ali and said: Am I not the Guardian who has more authority over the believers than they have over themselves? They said: Yes. He said: Do I not have more authority over every believer than he has over himself? They said: Yes. He said: This is the ‘Wali’ (Guardian) of whoever I am his Moula (Guardian). God, love whoever loves him and be hostile to whoever is hostile to him.”⁵

These two contents were also reported by Saad Ibn Abu Waqass. He reported, according to Al-Hakim in his *Mustadrak*, the following:

“... The Messenger said to Ali on the Day of Ghadeer Khum, after praising the Almighty and exalting Him: Do

4. Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi, *Kanz Al-Umal*, part 5, p. 23, hadith no. 356.

5. Imam Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*, part 4, p. 281 and Ibn Majah in his authentic *Sunan*, part 1, p. 45.

you know that I have more authority over the believers than they have over themselves? We said: Yes. He said: God, whoever I am his 'Moula,' Ali is his Moula. God, love whoever loves him, and be hostile to whoever is hostile to him . . .”⁶

Imam Ahmad reported in his *Musnad* through his channel to Abdul-Rahman Ibn Abu Leila that he said:

“I witnessed Ali at Al-Rahbah, asking people to testify. He said: I ask in the name of God whoever heard the Messenger of God saying on the Day of Ghadeer Khum: “Whoever I am his Moula, Ali is his Moula to stand up and testify. Abdul-Rahman said: Twelve companions who had attended the Battle of Badr stood up and I remember as if I am looking at one of them, and they said: “We testify that we heard the Messenger of God saying on the Day of Ghadeer Khum: Do I not have more authority over the believers than they have over themselves? . . .” We said: Yes, Messenger of God. He said: Whoever I am his Moula, Ali is his 'Moula.' God, love whoever loves him, and be hostile to whoever is hostile to him.”⁷

As to the last content, “Whoever I am his Moula, Ali is his Moul,” it was reported by tens of his companions.⁸

Al-Termathi in his authentic “Sunan” recorded that

6. Imam Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*, part 3, p. 116.

7. Imam Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*, part 1, p. 119.

8. Of these: Abu Leila Al-Ansari, Hubshi Ibn Janadah, Abu Ayyoub, Khalid Ibn Zeid Al-Ansari, Sahl Ibn Saad, Talhah Ibn Obeidullah, Abdullah Ibn Abbas, Abdullah Ibn Omar, Abdullah Ibn Mas-ood, the Third Caliph, Oday Ibn Hatam, Aleyah Ibn Bishr Al-Mazine, Aquabah Ibn Omar Al-Tuhani, Ammar Ibn Yasir, Abu Al-Haitham Al-Taihan, Habash Ibn Badeel Al-Khuza-i, Khuzaimah Ibn Thabit, (the man of the Two Testimonies), Abdullah Ibn Badeel Al-Khuza-i, Qais Ibn Saad Ibn Abadah, Hashim Al-Mirqal, and many others. Conveyed by Al-Ameeni in his book *Al-Ghadeer*, part 1 pp. 184-185.

Zaid Ibn Arqam reported that the Messenger said: 'Whoever I am his Moula, Ali is his Moula.'

Al-Hafith, Mohamad Ibn Majah in his authentic Sunan recorded the following:

"Muaweyah came (to Medina) on some of his pilgrimages. Saad Ibn Abu Waqass visited him. People mentioned Ali and Muaweyah spoke ill of him. Saad Ibn Abu Waqass angrily said to him: 'Do you say this about a man I heard the Messenger of God saying about him: 'Whoever I am his Moula, Ali is his Moula?'. . . .'"¹⁰

Of course, whoever reported the three contents or the last two contents or the first and the third contents is from the reporters of the last one. There is no contradiction between these reports. A reporter may choose on one occasion to report some of what he heard from the Messenger or any other person, then he chooses at another occasion to report most of what he heard from him and on a third occasion, he may report all of what he heard completely. And none of these reports contradict each other.

Thus, Abu Al-Tufail, Amir Ibn Wathilah reported that seventeen companions responded to the question of the Imam Ali in Kufa and testified that they heard from the Messenger on the Day of Ghadeer Khum words which contained all three contents, as we have mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. We find also, in another hadith in which the Imam Ali asked the companions who were with him to testify about the event of Al-Ghadeer, that Abu Al-Tufail reported the following:

"Ali gathered people at Al-Rahbah, then he said to them: 'I ask in the name of God any Muslim who heard the Messenger of God saying on the Day of Ghadeer Khum what he said, to stand up. Thirty men stood up (and Abu Na-eem said: Many People stood and testified) that the Messenger of God held the hand of Ali and said to people: "Do you know that I have more authority over the

9. Al-Termathi in his authentic *Sunan*, part 5, p. 297, (hadith no. 3797).

10. Ibn Majah, his authentic *Sunan*, part 1, p. 45.

believers than they have over themselves? They said: Yes, Messenger of God. He said: "Whoever I am his Moula (Guardian), this Ali is his Moula. God, love whoever loves him, and be hostile to whoever is hostile to him." Abu Al-Tufail said: I left the place with some doubt. I met Zaid Ibn Arqam and told him what I had heard Ali saying. Zaid said: What do you doubt? I heard the Messenger of God saying that to him."¹¹

The Messenger spoke about Ali's leadership on an occasion other than the occasion of Ghadeer Khum. Al-Termathi in his authentic *Sunnan* recorded that Imran Ibn Hossain reported that four men complained about Ali to the Messenger of God, and the Messenger was angry and said to them:

"What do you want from Ali? What do you want from Ali? What do you want from Ali? Ali is from me and I am from him. And he is the Wali (Guardian) of every believer after me."¹²

Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad* (part 4, page 437) reported this hadith with little difference in wording, and he said that the Prophet said: "Leave Ali alone, leave Ali alone, leave Ali alone. Ali is from me and I am from him. And he is the 'Wali' (Guardian) of every believer." Imam Ahmad recorded through his channel to Sa-eed Ibn Jubair that Ibn Jubair said that Ibn Abbas reported that Buraidah Al-Aslami said:

"I went with an expedition under Ali's leadership to Yemen, and I noticed from him an unfriendly attitude. When I came to the Messenger of God, I mentioned Ali and spoke ill of him. I noticed the face of the Messenger was changing. He said: Buraidah, do I have more authority over the believers than they have over themselves? I said: Yes, Messenger of God. He said: Whoever I am his 'Moula' Ali is his 'Moula.'"¹³

11. Imam Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*, part 4, p. 370.

12. Al-Termathi, his authentic *Sunan*, part 5, p. 296.

13. Imam Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*, part 5, p. 347. Al-Hakim also recorded it in *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 110.

Imam Ahmad also reported in his *Musnad* (part 5, page 356) that the Messenger said to Buraidah: "Speak not ill of Ali for he is from me and I am from him, and he is your 'Wali' after me."

The hadith of the Ghadeer is authentic, and Muta-watir. It was reported by over one hundred companions; more than twenty-four historians; twenty-seven hadith recorders; eleven commentators on the Holy Qur'an and a like number of theologians, and it was reported by many writers in every century after the Hijrah.¹⁴

THE MEANING OF HADITH AL-GHADEER

Knowing that the Hadith of Ghadeer is authentic and certain, it is time to speak of what this hadith indicates. To understand the hadith, we ought to know the following:

1. Is there any difference between the word "wali" and "Moula"? This is because the word "wali" came in some of the hadiths, and most of the hadiths contained the word moula.

2. If the two words have one meaning, what did the word moula mean?

3. What did the Messenger mean by the word "oula" which was mentioned in many of the reported statements?

"wali" and "moula"

The two words "wali" and moula almost have the same meaning except that the word wali can be associated with matters as well as with the rational beings. So you may say he is Wali of the Mosque, as you may say God is the Wali of the believers. But the word moula would be associated only with the rational. Thus, you can say moula of the believers and you cannot say the moula of the Mosque.

The Arabic dictionaries show that the word Moula has the following meanings:

14. Al-Ameeni, *Al-Ghadeer*, part 1, p. 6-8.

1. admirer
2. neighbor
3. guest
4. partner
5. son
6. cousin, son of the uncle
7. nephew (son of a sister)
8. son-in-law
9. a relative
10. uncle (brother of the father)
11. companion
12. benefactor
13. benefactored
14. a party of a pact
15. emancipator
16. the Lord
17. owner
18. master (other than the emancipator)
19. slave
20. follower
21. helper
22. one who has more right in something
23. an administrator of some affairs
24. wali
25. an ally (15)

The word moula probably had been used for each one of these twenty-five meanings. However, the first fifteen of the meanings are not of frequent use and people do not understand from the word moula any of them. None of these meanings would be understood from that word except with some additional evidence. This means that when the word moula is used, the listener may think that the word meant one of the last ten meanings and none of the first fifteen meanings would be a good probability. In fact, only two of the last ten would be a good probability when the word moula is used; Namely: Master and servant.

However, the word moula in the hadith of Al-Ghadeer

did not mean any of the first fifteen meanings. The neighbor, the guest, the partner, the son, the son of the sister, the son-in-law, the companion, were not meant for Ali. Ali was not a neighbor or guest or partner or a son or a son of a sister or guest, or a companion to whoever the Messenger of God was a neighbor or guest, or a partner, or a son of a sister or son-in-law or a companion. The Prophet was not an uncle of anyone because he did not have a brother to be the uncle of his son.

The Messenger did not mean from the word *moula* a relative, or a cousin because such information is senseless. It would not be proper for the Messenger to gather people in order to declare that, because every Muslim knows that Ali is a cousin of the Holy Prophet. Whoever is related to one of the two is related to the other.

The Messenger did not mean admirer because it would be improper for the Messenger to gather thousands of people to announce that Ali admires whoever the Messenger of God admires. Again, Ali is not the only one who admired all people whom the Holy Prophet admired. All good companions used to admire people whom the Messenger admired. Furthermore, the Messenger wanted to say that he is the *Moula* of all Muslims, and the Messenger did not admire all Muslims because he did not admire the transgressors among them.

The Messenger did not mean by the word *moula* the benefactor, because the Messenger was not benefactored by a great number of people. He did not mean the benefactor either, for he did not materially benefactor all the Muslims. The Messenger wanted to say that Ali is like him in being a *Moula* of all Muslims from all generations.¹⁵ He did not mean by the word *moula* the spiritual benefactor, though the Messenger was truly a benefactor of all Muslims because he led them to the religion of God. And so was Ali because of his unparalleled endeavor in the way of God for making the word of God victorious. The Messenger did not mean that, because he was not at that

15. Al-Ameeni, *Al-Ghadeer*, part 1, pp. 362-363.

time trying to inform the Muslims about something that already took place. He wanted, by this declaration, to bestow on Ali a rank and a position.

Nor did the Messenger mean by the word Moula the emancipator, for he did not emancipate all the Muslims, because the majority of the Muslims were not slaves at his time; nor were they so after his time.

The last ten meanings are not all proper for the Prophet to use. He could not mean by moula the Lord, for that would be profane; nor did he mean the servant or the follower because the Messenger was not a servant or a follower of anybody. Nor did he mean the owner because the Messenger was not the owner of the Muslims. He did not mean an ally, because the Messenger was the leader of all Muslims rather than their ally. Even the spiritual alliance could not be meant because the Holy Prophet was not in alliance with the transgressors from among the Muslims and they were and are numerous.

Nor did the Messenger mean the helper because the Messenger, as I mentioned before, wanted to say that he is the Moula of all Muslims from all generations and the Messenger was not the helper of all generations. No one can be a helper of all generations except God alone. Again, the Messenger was not a helper of all Muslims. He was a helper of only the sincere ones among them, and he did not want to aid the disobedient Muslims.

Only four out of ten remained which are the following:

The master other than the emancipator, and the one who has more right than others and the administrator of an affair and the wali.

The last one could not be meant unless it meant one of the first three, because it does not have an independent meaning.

Master would be proper if it means leader or the one who is followed, because the Messenger was a leader of all Muslims. The Messenger also possessed more authority than others and he was the administrator of the affairs of the Muslims. All these meanings are close to each other and similar to the meaning of leader or the one who is sup-

posed to be followed by people. Thus, when “Moula” meant the one who has more authority over every believer than they have over themselves and the one who has more right to administer the affairs of the believers, Ali would be the leader of the Muslims and the administrator of their affairs by the order of God. This is because the Prophet was their Moula by the order of God.

What did the messenger mean by the word “Oula” when he directed the questions to the crowd, asking whether they believe that he is “oula” in the believers than they are to themselves?

The Arabic dictionaries tell us that the word oula may come for one of the two following meanings:

1. The one who has more right

2. The one who is more proper. This is applicable to things rather than persons. Of course, the Holy Prophet would not mean by oula the more proper. For it would be very improper for the Prophet to ask the Muslims: Am I not more proper to the believers than themselves.

The Holy Prophet wanted to remind the Muslims of a right he was given by the Almighty in a revelation recorded in the Holy Qur’an:

“The Prophet has more authority over the believers than they have over themselves . . .” (chapter 33, verse 6)

The verse states that the Messenger has a Divine right in administrating the affairs of the Muslims more than the Muslims have in administering their own affairs. *That is because they have to obey him and to follow his order.* The Holy Qur’an emphasized this right in many verses. Among them are the following:

“And it is not permitted for a male believer or female believer to have their own choices in their affairs when God and His Messenger decide in their affairs. And whoever disobeys God and His Messenger, he obviously is straying.”¹⁶

If we understand all this, it would be easy for us to

16. The Holy Qur’an chapter 33, verse 36.

determine what the Messenger meant by his declaration on the Day of Ghadeer Khum. If we take only the last part of the declaration: "Whoever I am his Moula Ali is his Moula, nothing could be meant by the word Moula but the leader (the guardian), or the one who was given by God the right to administer the affairs of the Muslims. The Messenger declares that Ali is like him in that.

If we take this part of the declaration along with the second part: "Do I not have more authority over the believers than they have over themselves" (and this was mentioned in many reports), the meaning would become crystal clear. The Prophet, according to the Holy Qur'an, has more authority over believers than the believers have over themselves and this is what the Prophet wanted to remind the Muslims of. Since he followed this question by saying "whoever I am his Moula Ali is his Moula," he meant nothing other than that Ali, like the Prophet, has the right to administer the affairs of the Muslims more than they have of right to administer their affairs.

If anyone doubts this, the first part of the Declaration of the Ghadeer ought to remove any doubt. The Prophet said in that part: "I am leaving in you the Two Valuables: The Book of God and the members of my House. You shall not go astray if you follow them. Beware how you shall treat them after me, and they shall not part with each other until they join me at the Basin (on the Day of Judgment)."

Since the Holy Qur'an and the members of the House of the Holy Prophet (who were headed by Ali) must be followed, the adherence to the teaching of the "Itrah" (the members of the House of the Prophet) would be as imperative as the adherence to the teaching of the Holy Qur'an.

The hadiths which contained this part are numerous and certainly authentic. Thus, the Muslims have to obey Ali as they obey the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet. Adding to these hadiths what the Messenger said to Buraidah and others in various hadiths that Ali is from him and that he is from Ali and that Ali is the Guardian of

every believer after him (or he said: He is your Wali after me), no room would be left for arguments about what the Messenger meant from the two words moula and "wali."

This is in complete accord with other statements of the Holy Prophet. It was also mentioned in chapter 36 that the Prophet said that to obey Ali is to obey God and His Messenger; to disobey Ali is to disobey God and His Messenger; to part with Ali is to part with God and His Messenger and to speak ill of Ali is to speak ill of God and His Messenger.

THE VERSE OF PROCLAMATION

The Holy Prophet issued his declaration to the Muslims at Ghadeer Khum concerning Ali after he was commanded by the Almighty to proclaim Ali's leadership.

We read in chapter no. 5, Al-Ma-idah (the Food) the following verse:

"O Apostle, proclaim the message which had been sent to thee from thy Lord. If thou do not, thou would not have communicated His message. And God will protect thee from (mischievous) people. Certainly God guides not the unbelievers."¹⁷

This verse, regardless of any hadith that contains its explanation, informs us of the following:

1. There was a previous Divine Message which came to the Holy Prophet before the revelation of this verse, and that Message was supposed to be communicated to the Muslims by the Holy Prophet.

2. The Messenger delayed the communication of that message to the Muslims, or he asked his Lord to relieve him from the mission of communicating that Message, because he feared that some of the Muslims would not be receptive to the message. A phrase in this verse: "And

17. The Holy Qur'an chapter 5, verse 67.

God will protect thee from people,” testifies to the Prophet’s apprehension.

3. The contents of the previous message which was delayed was highly important. Its importance is underscored by the warning phrase contained in the verse of proclamation: “And if thou do not, thou would not have communicated the message of God,” This phrase warned the Prophet that if he does not communicate the message, he would not have fulfilled his mission as a Messenger of God, and the failure to proclaim that Message equals the failure in proclamation of the whole Islamic Message.

The Contents of the Message

Had this verse been revealed while the Messenger was still in Mecca in the first three years from his mission, we would understand that the Prophet was afraid to confront his pagan society with the invitation to disregard its idols. But this verse is a part of the chapter of “Al Ma-idah” (the Food), which is Medinite, one hundred percent. This meant that the verse as well as the whole chapter of the Food were revealed after the departure of the Holy Prophet from Mecca. Therefore, the Prophet’s delay in communicating the previous message was not motivated by his fear of confronting the pagan society with the doctrine of Monotheism.

Had this verse been revealed at the beginning of the Period of the Hijrah, the content of the previous Message could be a commandment to combat the pagan warriors or pertaining to a prayer or Zakat or fast which seemed to fall heavy on the Muslims. Such a commandment means loss of lives and wealth or additional toil, and the Prophet was afraid that the Muslims would not like that. But the chapter of Food was revealed during the tenth year of the Hijrah, after all devotional duties were proclaimed and after the Muslims had already participated in numerous battles against the pagans and others.

It is reported that Ayeshah and Abdullah Ibn Omar

both said that “Al-Ma’idah” (the chapter of Food) was the last chapter of the Holy Qur’an.¹⁸ This is supported by the fact that the chapter contains a verse proclaiming the completion of religion: “Today, I have completed your religion for you and perfected My favor upon you, and chosen Islam as a religion for you.” (Chapter 5, verse 3). This verse was revealed when the Messenger was on the Mount of Arafat. Al-Bukhari recorded in his *Sahih* that Omar reported that.¹⁹ It is also reported that the verse of the completion of the religion was revealed when the Messenger was coming back from the Valedictory Pilgrimage while he was speaking on the Day of Ghadeer Khum. Many hadiths have reported that, and I shall mention some of them.

From this we know that the contents of the Message which the Holy Prophet delayed its proclamation was not a commandment pertaining to the proclamation of the doctrine of the One God. Nor was it pertaining to a devotional duty or a defensive war against the pagans or the followers of the Scriptures. It was rather a commandment pertaining to a matter belonging to the internal political affairs of the Muslim State. Thus, we have the two following facts:

(1) The 5th Qur’anic chapter, Al-Ma-idah, which contains this verse was revealed during the Valedictory Pilgrimage or after its performance.

(2) The Messenger, at Ghadeer Khum, proclaimed that Ali is, like him, the Moula of all believers. This took place while he was returning from his Valedictory Pilgrimage.

Putting these facts together, it would be very logical to infer that the contents of the message had to deal with the proclamation of Ali’s leadership.

This means that when the Messenger received the order from his Lord to proclaim Ali’s leadership, he feared that

18. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 2, p. 311.

19. Al-Bukhari, his *Sahih*, part 6, p. 63 (Book of Commentary on the Holy Qur’an, chapter 5).

some of his followers might think that he favored Ali because of his relationship to him. Upon this, the Revelation came down, ordering him to proclaim what he received from his Lord. Otherwise, he would not have fulfilled his mission as the Messenger of God. This warning was coupled with a Divine Promise: That God will protect him from the people whom he feared. When he received this serious commandment, he suddenly stopped at Ghadeer Khum to proclaim what he received from his Lord concerning Ali.

Political and Religious Leadership

Should this be what the verse meant, then what the Messenger has proclaimed in his declaration on the Day of Ghadeer Khum was the religious and worldly leadership of Ali, which was similar to the leadership of the Holy Messenger. Had what the Holy Prophet meant been less than worldly leadership, he would not have feared the disagreement of his followers, and there would have been no need for the strong command and serious warning. The ambitious Meccans and non-Meccans who were aspirant for the Islamic leadership would not be disturbed by giving Ali any rank if that rank did not include his political leadership.

The commandment of proclamation is evidence that the Almighty wanted to secure for His servant Muslims the leadership with which they will never go astray: That is the leadership of Ali, the head of the members of the House which does not part with the Holy Qur'an and insures the nation's unity and progress. To comply with this Divine order, the Messenger stood up to address the thousands of pilgrims, declaring what he declared on Ghadeer Khum.

It may be said that the message which the Holy Prophet delayed its proclamation for his fear of dispute was pertaining to the people of the Scripture. The evidence of this is that before this verse, we read verses speaking of the people of the scriptures, among which is the following:

“The Jews say: God’s hand is tied up. Be their hands tied up and be they accursed for the (blasphemy) they uttered. Nay, His both hands are widely outstretched; He gives and spends (of His bounty) as He pleases. But the Revelation that comes to you from God increases in most of them their obstinate rebellion and blasphemy. Among them, We have placed enmity and hatred till the Day of Judgment. Every time they kindle the fire of war, God does extinguish it, but they (ever strive) to do mischief on earth and God loves not those who do mischief. If only the people of the Book had believed and been righteous, we would indeed have blotted out their inequities and admitted them to Paradise of bliss. If only they had stood fast by the Law (the Old Testament), the Gospel and all the Revelation that was sent to them from their Lord, they would have enjoyed happiness from every side. There is from among them a party on the right course; but many of them follow a course that is evil.”²⁰

In fact, after the Verse of Proclamation we find a number of verses dealing with the people of the Scripture of which are the following:

“Say: O people of the Book, ye have no ground to stand upon unless ye stand fast by the Old Testament and the Gospel and all the revelation that has come to you from thy Lord. It is the revelation that has come to you from thy Lord that increases in most of them their obstinate rebellion and blasphemy but sorrow thou not over these faithless people.”²¹

If we look at the verse deeply, we can easily conclude that it is independent from the verses which precede it. The meaning of the Verse of Proclamation indicates that it has no relation with what was recorded before it or after it. The Verse of Proclamation indicates that the Messenger

20. The Holy Qur’an, chapter 5, verse 68.

21. The Holy Qur’an, chapter 5, verse 87-88.

was afraid to announce the contents of the message to which the verse of proclamation refers. But the Messenger was not afraid at the time of its revelation to announce any message dealing with the relation of the Muslims to the people of the Scriptures.

Many battles between the Muslims and the Jews took place before the revelation of this chapter. Of those battles were: The Battle of Banu Qainaqah, the Battle of Banu Al-Nadheer, which took place at the beginning of the period of Hijrah, and the Battle of Banu Quraidhah, which took place after the Battles of the Confederation or (the Battle of Moat) in the fifth year after the Hijrah. The final of those battles between the Prophet and the Jews was the Battle of Khaibar, which took place during the 6th year after the Hijrah. By this, all Jewish danger against the Muslims came to an end. Thus, the Messenger would not be in a state of fear of Jews if he were to announce a message against them during the 10th year after the Hijrah.

The Muslims and the Christians were in a state of war, started with the Battle of Muthah during the 8th year, and followed by the Battle of Tabook during the 9th year. Since the Holy Prophet was not afraid to fight the Christians at the battlefield, he could not be afraid to announce any message against them.

In addition to this, many chapters which were revealed before the chapter of "Al-Ma-idah" (the Food) contain verses whose contents are similar to the contents of the verses which preceded or followed the Verse of Proclamation in the chapter of Al-Ma-idah. The verses which preceded this verse, command the believer not to take offense from the people of the Scripture who ridiculed the Faith of Islam and mention that from among those people are the ones who were cursed by God and whom God transformed into apes and swines. The verses call them hypocrites who tell the Muslims that they have believed in Islam, yet, they hasten to sinful actions and take the unlawful fund. The verses state that whenever they start the fire of war, God extinguishes it. Had the people of the

Scriptures been righteous and followed the Old Testament and the Gospel, they would have entered Paradise and would have eaten from above them and from below them and from what is under their feet.

What follows these verses states that the people of the Scriptures are not on a solid foundation until they follow the Old Testament and the Gospel. It states also that the children of Israel had killed some Messengers and discredited others after the covenant was made between God and them, and that those who say that the Messiah is God are unbelievers.

These contents and many similar to them were announced in various chapters which were revealed before the time of the chapter of "Al-Ma-idah" (the Food).

In the second chapter we read the following:

"Is it that whenever there comes to you an apostle with what ye yourselves desire not, ye puffed up with pride? Some ye called imposters, and others ye slew. They say our hearts are wrapped (Thus, we need no more of God's Apostle). Nay, God's curse is on them for their blasphemy; little is it they believe."²²

And in the 3rd chapter of (Aul-Imran), we read the following:

"If only the people of the Book had faith, it were best for them; among them are some who have faith, but most of them are perverted transgressors. They will do you no harm, barring a trifling annoyance; if they come out to fight you, they will show you their backs and no help shall they get. Shame is pitched for them (like a tent) wherever they are found except when under the covenant of protection from God and from men. They draw on themselves wrath from God, and pitched over them a tent of destitution. This is because they rejected the signs of God and slew the Prophets in

22. The Holy Qur'an, chapter 2, verse 31.

defiance of right. This is because they rebelled and transgressed beyond bounds.” (verses 111 to 113).

And in the chapter of Mary which is a Meccan chapter, we read the following:

“They say: (God) Most Gracious has begotten a son! Indeed ye have put forth a thing most monstrous. At it the skies are almost ready to burst, the earth to split asunder, and the mountains to fall down in utter ruin, that they should invoke a son for (God) Most Gracious. For it is not consonant with the Majesty of God (Most Gracious) that He should beget a son.” (verses 90 to 94)

And in the chapter of Bara-ah which was revealed during the 9th year after the Hijrah. We read the following:

“They take their priests and their monks to be their Lords other than God, and (they take as their Lord) Christ the son of Mary; yet they were commanded to worship but One God. There is no God, but HE. Praise and Glory belong to Him; For He is above having the partners they associate with Him).” (Chapter 9, verse 33)

All these verses indicate that the Messenger was not afraid while during the 10th year after the Hijrah to confront the people of the Scriptures with a battle or message. But the Verse of Proclamation tells us that he was apprehensive of announcing a message which was revealed to him, and God ordered him to announce it and promised to protect him from people. Therefore, the content of the Verse of Proclamation testifies that it is not related to the verses before it or after it. It is completely independent of those verses.

This is what compels us to conclude that what the Messenger had feared to communicate to the people was not a message relating to the foreign policy dealing with the people of the Scriptures or the Politheists. It was rather a message dealing with an internal political affair.

Since it was not dealing with the devotional Islamic duties, it would be logical to conclude that the delayed message was dealing with the rule and the leadership of the Islamic State.

The chapter of Al-Ma'idah had been revealed during the Valedictory pilgrimage or while the Prophet was on his way back from this Pilgrimage as many hadiths indicate. This Revelation was followed by the Messenger's sudden stop at Ghadeer Khum, rallying the pilgrims to announce to them the leadership of Ali. Putting the two events together, we may logically conclude that the contents of the delayed message was the proclamation of that leadership. We can conclude this without resorting to the various hadiths which announced the reasons of the Revelation of the Verse of Proclamation.

Our certainty increases when we know that several hadiths stated that the Verse of Proclamation had to deal with the leadership of the Imam Ali. Al-Soyouti recorded that Al-Hafith Ibn Abu Hatem recorded that Abu-Sa-eed Al-Khidri reported that the Messenger of God on the day of Ghadeer Khum received the revelation of the Verse of Proclamation and that it was revealed concerning Ali Ibn Abu Talib.²³

It is recorded in *Kanz Al-Ummal*, part 6, page 143, that Al-Mahamili reported in his Amali through his channel to Ibn Abbas the following:

“When the Prophet was commanded to proclaim Ali's leadership, the Prophet went to Mecca. He said: I see the Muslims coming afresh from the period of pre-Islam. If I deliver the message about Ali, they would say he favored his cousin. The Prophet went on until he completed the Valedictory Pilgrimage, then he set out towards Medina until he came to Ghadeer Khum. At that place, the Almighty revealed to him: ‘O Messenger, deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord . . . A caller summoned the pilgrims for prayer. Then the Prophet stood up and held the hand of Ali and said: Whoever I am his

Moula, Ali is his Moula. God, love whoever loves him, and be hostile to whoever is hostile to him.”²⁴

Ibn Mardawaih reported similar to these words through his channel to Ibn Abbas. Ibn Batee'eq in his book Al-Omdah, page 49, reported that Abu Is-haq Al-Tha'labi reported in his Commentary on the Holy Qur'an, (Al-Kashf and Al-Bayan) that Al-Imam Al-Baqir and Ibn Abbas said that the Verse of Proclamation was revealed to the Messenger concerning Ali and that the Messenger took the hand of Ali and said “Whoever I am his Moula Ali is his Moula.”²⁵

Sheikh Al-Islam Abu Is-haq Al-Hamweeni in his book The Reasons of Revelation, page 150, recorded that Abu Sa'eed Al-Khidri said that this verse was revealed on the Day of Ghadeer Khum concerning Ali Ibn Abu Talib.²⁶

Imam Fakhr-Ul-Deen Al-Razi in his big Commentary on the Holy Qur'an, part 3, page 637, said that Al-Bura Ibn Azib, Ibn Abbas, and Mohammad Ibn Ali, reported that the verse was revealed about Ali Ibn Abu Talib.

Thus, the historical declaration of the Messenger on the day of Ghadeer Khum was a compliance to a Divine Revelation commanding him to communicate to the Muslims the leadership of Ali and promising him protection against whomever he feared if he communicated it.

This shows clearly that the declaration of Al-Ghadeer was extremely important. It meant that Ali's announced leadership includes the political and non-political affairs. Had it been anything less than that, the revelation would not have come down commanding and warning the Holy Prophet. For non-political leadership of Ali would not be objectionable to the ambitious companions.

(23), (24), (25), (26), and (27) are recorded by the reliable Sheikh Hussein Ameen in his book Al-Ghadeer, part I, pp. 214-222.

**WHY DID THE PROPHET NOT SAY:
“ALI IS YOUR AMEER,
OR MY CALIPH, OR YOUR IMAM?”**

The Declaration of Ghadeer is well known to the Muslim scholars from every School of Thought. Yet, many Muslim scholars say that the declaration does not prove that Ali is the Caliph of the Prophet and that the Prophet had chosen him as his successor. Had he chosen him as his successor, he should not have used the word *moula* or *wali*. He should have rather said to the Muslims: Ali is your “Ameer” after me or he is my Caliph, or he is your Imam after me.

The Messenger did not say “Ali is your Ameer after me,” because the Messenger did not usually use the word *ameer* in any matter other than military affairs or the leadership of pilgrimage. As to the administration of the affairs of the Muslims in general, or in some Islamic provinces, the Messenger used to use the word “*wilayah*” (right of management of the public or private affairs in the people’s interest). He used to send administrators to some provinces and call them *Wulat* (plural of *Wali*) and he used to call himself “*Waliyyu Al-Muslimeen*” (Guardian of the Muslims).

The Holy Qur’an declared: “The Prophet is *moula* (has more authority) over the believers than they have over themselves . . .” (Chapter 33, verse 6). The Holy Qur’an also says your *Wali* (Guardian) is only God, His Messenger and the believers who offer the prayer and give the poor *Zakat* while they are bowing.”²⁸ The Holy Qur’an also says: “There (on the Day of Judgment) *Al-wilayat* (the authority) belongs only to God, the True God. He is the Best Rewarder and the Best Granter of a good fate.”²⁹ The Holy Qur’an also declares: “And you should know that

28. The Holy Qur’an, chapter 5, verse 58.

29. The Holy Qur’an, chapter 18, verse 46.

God is your Moula (Guardian). He is the Good Moula and He is the Good Helper.”³⁰

I did not see in the Holy Qur’an that God called His Messenger “Ameer,” nor did I see in any hadith that the Holy Prophet called himself Ameer or “Hakim” (ruler) or governor. The reason is that the natural relationship between the administrator of the affairs of the Muslims and the Muslims is not a relation between a ruler and a ruled or a prince or a king and subjects. It is rather, a relation similar to that of a father to his children. He administers their affairs, and protects their interests as a father protects the interests of his children. The administrators of the affairs of Muslims are not a high class, and the rest of the people are not a lower class.

As to the question of why did not the Prophet use the word caliph, the answer is that a caliph should be obeyed only after the death of the Messenger. Ali, according to the Prophet’s declaration, is not only his successor but also his deputy during his life time and his successor after his death. Thus, he was to be obeyed at the time of the Prophet as well as after him.

I have advanced that Abu Tharr reported that the Messenger said: “Ali, whoever obeys me obeys God, and whoever obeys you obeys me, and whoever disobeys me disobeys God, and whoever disobeys you disobeys me.”³¹ Thus, Ali was not only a successor of the Messenger, but also his representative and deputy during his lifetime. He was (according to the Declaration of Ghadeer Khum), like the Prophet in being a guardian of the believers and having more authority over them than they have over themselves.

The Prophet declared that Ali to him is like Aaron to Moses, and Aaron was deputy of Moses during his lifetime and, like Moses, a leader of the Israelites. This is what was expressed by all the hadiths in this chapter and previous chapters.

30. The Holy Qur’an, chapter 8, verse 41.

31. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 131.

We ought not forget that the Messenger said to Bureidah and other companions according to various hadiths: "Ali is from me and I am from him, and he is your Wali after me, or that he is the Wali of every 'Mu'min' (believer) after me." These hadiths unequivocally indicate that Ali is the Caliph of the Prophet, and so does his statement in the hadiths of Al-Thaqalain which was discussed extensively in chapter 37. These hadiths state clearly that the members of the House of the Holy Prophet are successors of the Prophet, and Ali was the head of the members of his House.

Before I conclude my discussion about the Declaration of Ghadeer Khum, I would like to mention that the Muslims who argue against the indication of the hadith on the succession of the Imam to the Messenger were not motivated by stubbornness or prejudice. Their negative attitude is due to the fact that they had grown up in a society which believes that the Messenger did not appoint any successor. Thus, it became difficult for them to reconcile this belief and the indication of the Declaration of the Ghadeer Khum that the Messenger had appointed Ali as his successor.

I would say sincerely that if the Messenger had stood on the day of Ghadeer Khum saying: "Whoever I am his Moula, Abu Bakr is his Moula. God, love whoever loves him and be hostile to whoever is hostile to him," I would have believed without any hesitation that the Messenger had appointed Abu Bakr as his successor. Had this been the case, the Muslims who deny the indication of Ali's appointment would not deny Abu Bakr's appointment. Had the Prophet said that Abu Bakr has more authority over the believers than they have over themselves and that the adherence to his command and the command of the Holy Qur'an is a security against straying, the Messenger's appointment of Abu Bakr would not have become controversial.

THE CONCLUSION

We have tried in our discussion of the caliphate to answer the question which we had to face because of the development which led to the end of the righteous caliphate within a time whose shortness is astonishing. For the caliphate did not last more than thirty years.

The governmental systems which are based on political doctrines in this century, and before, have lived much more than the Righteous Caliphate of Islam lived. Some of these governmental systems have lived hundreds of years and the most recent of them, the Communistic system, has already lived more than half a century. Yet, none of these governmental systems was transformed into a military dictatorial power, and we see evidence pointing to a long life of these modern systems, without turning against themselves.

The good Islamic governmental system, though much higher in spirit and doctrine than all of the modern systems, did not live but shortly. It was only natural that such a sudden death of the Righteous Caliphate make us ask the following questions:

Was this sudden death a natural result of the adherence of the Muslims to a silent directive which the Holy Messenger wanted the Muslims to follow because he (according to many Muslim scholars) had left it to the nation to choose for itself the leader which it wants? Or was the sudden death of the Righteous Caliphate a natural result of the Muslims' negligence of the pronounced directive which the Messenger issued and wanted his nation to

follow? For he chose a leader for the nation, and the nation or its aristocracy did not want his leadership.

In order to find the facts in this important point of the Islamic history, I have tried, in discussing the caliphate, to answer the two following questions:

1. Should the caliphate have been by inheritance or by election, or should it have been through appointment by the Holy Prophet?

2. If it should have been through appointment by the Holy Prophet, did the Holy Prophet actually choose anyone to lead the nation after him?

Our discussion has led us to conclude that the caliphate was supposed to be by appointment from the Prophet and that the Prophet had chosen a man to lead the nation after him, and that leader was Ali Ibn Abu Talib. We have also concluded that the fracture of the unity of the nation and the crises which took place in the first century of the Islamic era was a natural result of the refusal of the Muslims to follow the directive of the Messenger concerning the caliphate.

Had Ali Ibn Abu Talib come to power after the death of the Holy Prophet, the war of Bassrah, the war of Siffeen, and the war of Al-Nahrawan could not have taken place. The war of Al-Nahrawan was a product of the war of Siffeen, and the wars of Siffeen and Bassrah were the products of the violent death of Othman. Had Ali been the First Caliph, Othman would not have become a caliph and would not have been killed. Had these three wars not taken place, the Righteous Caliphate would not have ended so fast.

Should Ali have been the First Caliph, the Omayyads could not have mustered enough power to enable them to bring the Righteous Caliphate to an end and replace it with a despotic rule which was rotated among them for about ninety years. Nor could the Omayyads have been able to annihilate the members of the House of the Holy Prophet in the massacre of Karbala. Furthermore, the Righteous Caliphate could have continued for a long time

until the principles of Islam became deeply rooted in the Muslim society.

Had Ali been the First Caliph after the Holy Prophet, the Muslims would not have been divided into Sunnite and Shi-ites because Sunnism and Shi-ism are the products of the controversy of whether the Holy Prophet chose Ali for the leadership or left the matter to the Muslims to choose for themselves. With Ali in power after the death of the Holy Prophet, the Muslims would not have been divided over the caliphate, because there is no Muslim School which claims that the Messenger appointed Abu Bakr or any companion other than Ali to lead the nation.

However, these conclusions, which our research had led us to, do not mean that we say that the Three Caliphs and the rest of the companions had deliberately violated the commandment of the Messenger of God after he declared Ali's leadership. Nay, we ought to think that these people were too pious to deliberately oppose the commandment of God and His Messenger in matters which concern their religion.

These righteous people thought that the leadership of the nation is of their worldly affairs. They thought that they had the right to choose for themselves a leader other than the one whom the Holy Prophet chose for conducting their worldly affairs. The Messenger used to consult his companions in matters about which there was no Revelation. It seems that they thought that the caliphate is not a subject of revelation. The companions had the right to form their own opinions, and whoever is qualified to form his own opinion would deserve the reward of God whether he is right or wrong.

The companions were humans. They could not foresee the future and the consequences of their choice. Therefore, they were not responsible for the faith-testing crises which took place after the death of Othman. They were not responsible for the early death of the Righteous Caliphate. They thought that the best for Quraish and for themselves is to choose other than what the Prophet had

chosen, and they were not able to see the advantage of what the Prophet had chosen.

The companions formed wrong opinions and made erroneous decisions and did not understand the dimensions of what the Messenger aimed at when he declared the leadership of the Imam Ali. However, it is our duty to think well of the companions and to give our best interpretations to their actions and attitudes. We are commanded to ask the Almighty God to forgive our brothers who preceded us in adopting the Faith of Islam, let alone the companions who were the first Muslim community on earth.

UNITY DOES NOT REQUIRE CONFORMITY

Our research and discussion concerning the caliphate have led us to conclude that the caliphate should have been through a selection by the Holy Prophet, and that the Messenger selected Ali to lead the nation. Yet, we do not expect, nor do we think it necessary, that all Muslims agree with us. There is no doubt that the two ideas of election and selection will find their supporters as long as the Muslim World remains.

We believe that this does not necessitate the Muslims to exchange animosity and suspicion. Difference in opinions should not prevent the Muslims from reciprocating respect, love and feeling of brotherhood if they agree that they have the right to have more than one opinion concerning the caliphate. The cause of the mutual suspicion between the supporters of the two ideas is not the difference in opinion. It is rather the belief of every School that the other School has no right to disagree with its opinion. Thus, each Islamic School of thought believes that its opinion is the Islam and that the opinion of others is a deviation and falsehood and a disagreement with God and His Messenger.

Should the two parties go back to what the logic calls for, they would find that the Almighty had completed His religion before Abu Bakr became caliph. The caliphate of

Abu Bakr is not mentioned in the Holy Qur'an or in the hadiths of the Holy Prophet, and it is not of the self-evident Islamic teaching. It is rather one of the events of the history of Islam which every Muslim has the right to form his (her) opinion positively or negatively. Neither a positive nor a negative opinion concerning the First Caliph could put a Muslim in the company of the enemies of God and His Messenger; nor would it put him in the company of transgressors.

The numerous statements and declarations of the Prophet which testify to his selection of the Imam Ali for the leadership may produce a high degree of certainty. Nevertheless, they did not make his appointment self-evident in the Islamic teaching. Therefore, a Muslim has the right to argue about it.

The difference between the two prominent Islamic Schools of thought (the Sunnite and the Shi-ite) concerning the caliphate or some Islamic rules is not more than a disagreement in understanding a part of the history of Islam or a disagreement about an Islamic Law.

The Muslims allowed themselves to disagree concerning some of the details of the Islamic rules which did not reach the degree of being self-evident in the religion of Islam. For this, they were expected to allow themselves to disagree concerning the caliphate without exchanging animosity and accusations of each other of being devious in their faith because of their opinions about the caliphate.

The Imams of the four Schools disagreed with each other about hundreds of Islamic Laws and issued different verdicts in various subjects. The plurality of the Sunnite Schools is a result of this disagreement. Had the four Imams agreed with each other in their verdicts, they would have only one School of thought, rather than four.

In spite of this plurality, the followers of the four Schools exchange respect and love. They do not accuse each other in their religion. They rather believe that they are good Muslims and good believers. This is what the logic and the teaching of the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet dictate. These disagreements are about questions

whose answers are not clear in the Holy Qur'an and in the hadiths of the Holy Prophet. Therefore, it would be the right of every qualified Islamic scholar to form his own opinion about such questions, without contradicting the Qur'an or the known "Sunnah" of the Prophet.

This generous and logical attitude which agrees with the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the instructions of the Holy Prophet Mohammad is missing in the area of the caliphate. The scholars of the four Schools believe that the caliphate is not an article of the faith of Islam, as they believe that the Messenger did not name Abu Bakr nor Omar nor Othman as his successors. In spite of this, these scholars do not permit any Muslim to discuss the soundness of their caliphate. To say that the Prophet had chosen Ali for the leadership would be considered by these scholars a heresy and an unforgivable major sin, as if it were a denial of the Prophethood of Mohammad or ascribing to the Almighty a partner.

Why is all this? The reason is obvious: The attitude of the Muslims towards the caliphate and the Caliphs is emotional. When man is ruled by his emotions, he cannot see things as they are. Emotion magnifies the minute, and belittles the important.

LET US FIND OUR WAY

To examine this opinion and see its soundness or error, we ought to measure it by the Book of God and the instructions of the Holy Prophet. It is easy to find the answer in the Book of God and in the authentic hadiths of the Messenger. As to the Book of God, we find many verses that give us the definition of "Iman," the sound belief and what constitutes it. In the second chapter from the Holy Qur'an we find the following:

"The Apostle believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord as do the men of faith. Each one of them believes in God, His Angels, His Books, and His Apostles. (They say:) We make no distinction between one or another of His Apostles. And they say: we listen and we

obey. Our Lord, we seek Thy forgiveness, and to Thee is the end of all journeys.” Chapter 2, verse 285. We also find in the same chapter the following:

“It is not the righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East or the West; but the righteous is he who believes in God, the Last Day, the Angels, the Book, and the Prophets and gives his wealth out of love for Him to the kin folks, the orphans, the needy, the wayfarers, the seekers of help and to set slaves free and offer their prescribed prayer and pay regular charity, and fulfill their covenants and those who are patient in period of deprivation, adversity, and in the defense (of sacred freedom). These are the people of the truth and these are the righteous.”¹

The first verse informs us that the believers are the believers in God, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, and it does not make the belief in a particular Islamic School of thought, or opinions about caliphs a requirement in the “Iman” (Faith).

The second verse also does not make the affiliation to any Islamic School of thought a requirement in the Faith. It rather declares that the truthful and the righteous ones are the believers in God, the Day of Judgment, the Angels, the Book, and the Prophets, and the givers of their wealth, for the love of God, to those who are in need, and the offerers of the prescribed prayer, regular charity, who fulfill their covenants and stand firmly in suffering, adversity and at the time of defense.

All righteous Muslims, whether Sunnites or Shi-ites meet these requirements.

This verse, like the first verse, does not condition the “Iman,” or truthfulness or righteousness with having a specific opinion, positive or negative, about the caliphate or about the four Islamic Schools of thought.

The following seven authentic hadiths are in full agreement with these verses:

1. Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih*, part 1, page 19, and

1. The Holy Qur'an, chapter 2, verse 177.

Muslim in his *Sahih*, part 1, page 166, recorded that Talhah Ibn Obeidullah reported that a beduin asked the Messenger about Islam. The Messenger replied: Five daily prayers. The Beduin said: Do I have to add to them any prayer? The Messenger said: No, unless you volunteer. Then the Messenger said: And the fast in the month of Ramadan. The Beduin said: Do I have to add to it any other fast? The Messenger said: No, unless you volunteer. Then he mentioned to him the prescribed charity, and the Beduin asked: Do I have to add to it? The Messenger said: No, unless you volunteer. The Beduin turned his back, saying: By God, I shall not add to this; nor shall I subtract from it. The Messenger said: The Beduin has succeeded if he is true.”

2. Muslim recorded in his *Sahih* that Abu Hurairah reported that a Beduin said to the Prophet: Advise me of a deed which if I do, I will be admitted to Paradise. The Messenger said: Worship God, ascribing no partner to Him, offer the prescribed prayer, the prescribed charity, and fast the month of Ramadan. The Beduin said: By God, in whose hand is my soul, I shall not add to this, nor shall I subtract from it. When he turned his back, the Messenger said: Whoever desires to look at a man from the people of Paradise should look at this man.²

3. Muslim also recorded that Abadah Ibn Al-Samit while he was on his deathbed said to people around him: I have reported to you all of what I heard from the Messenger of hadiths which are beneficial to you except one hadith. I shall report it to you while my soul is being taken by God. I heard the Messenger of God saying: “Whoever testifies that there is no God but the Almighty, and that Mohammad is Messenger of God, God shall protect him from Hell.”³

4. Muslim also recorded that Abadah Ibn Al-Samit reported that the Messenger of God said: “Whoever says: I bear witness that there is no God but the Almighty alone

2. Muslim, his *Sahih*, part 1, p. 19.

3. Muslim, his *Sahih*, part 1, pp. 174.

without partner; that Mohammad is His servant and Messenger; that Jesus is His servant and Messenger and the son of His maid; that he is His word given to Mary and a spirit from Him and that Paradise is a reality and Hell is a reality, God shall admit him into Paradise through any of its eight gates He chooses.”⁴

5. Muslim also recorded that Ma-ad Ibn Jabal reported that the Messenger said: What is due to God from His servants is that they worship Him, ascribing to Him no partner; and what is due to God’s servants from Him is that He will not punish anyone that does not ascribe to Him a partner . . .”⁵

6. Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* recorded that Abu Hurairah reported that the Messenger said to a questioner: The Iman (the Faith) is to believe in God, His Angels, His meeting, His Messengers, and to believe in the resurrection. He said also to the questioner: Islam is to worship God, ascribing to Him no partner; to offer the prescribed prayer; to pay the prescribed charity and to fast the month of Ramadan.”⁶

7. Muslim recorded in his *Sahih* that Omar reported that the Messenger said to a questioner: “Islam is to testify that there is no God but the Almighty and that Mohammad is Messenger of God; to offer the prescribed prayer; pay the regular charity; fast the month of Ramadan and visit the Kaaba, if you are able to.

The same questioner asked the Prophet to inform him about the Iman, and the Prophet said to him: To believe in God, His Angels, His Book, His Messengers, the Day of Judgment, and to believe in “Qadar,” pleasant and unpleasant.”⁷

These authentic hadiths and others of their kind (which I did not mention) agree with the Holy Qur’an. They

4. Muslim, his *Sahih*, part 1, pp. 226-227.

5. Muslim, his *Sahih*, part 1, p. 232.

6. Al-Bukhari, his *Sahih*, part 1, p. 20.

Muslim also reported it in his *Sahih*, part 1, pp. 162-167.

7. Muslim, his *Sahih*, part 1, p. 157.

together inform us that whoever believes in God, His Angels, His Book, His Messenger, His meeting and the Resurrection; worships God alone by offering the daily prayers, fasting the month of Ramadan and paying the poor's duty and offering the pilgrimage to Kaaba when physically and financially capable of doing that, he would be a genuine Muslim and believer. God will admit him to Paradise from any of its eight gates He chooses.

This would be true and applicable to any Muslim whether he believes that the first legitimate caliph after the death of the Messenger is Abu Bakr or Ali Ibn Abu Talib. The belief in the legitimacy of the succession of these caliphs was not mentioned in any of the above hadiths as a requirement in Islam or Iman or success; or for being away from Hell and entering Paradise.

This is what the logic dictates. The Messenger did not name any of the first Three Caliphs as his successor. Why should the belief in the soundness of their succession be a part of the Islamic religion and its denial be damaging to the Faith? The religion of Islam was completed during the time of the Holy Prophet and before the time of the caliphate, and the caliphate of these righteous companions was not mentioned in the instructions of the Holy Prophet.

If the Messenger had appointed Ali as his successor, his appointment would be from the teaching of the Holy Prophet (Sunnah); but such an appointment is not self-evident. It is not clear enough to prevent argument or doubt about its existence or about the indications of its hadiths. If a Muslim tries his best in conducting a research about this appointment and its evidence did not convince him, he would be excused and he would not be opposed to the Book of God nor to the instructions of the Holy Prophet intentionally.

The Book of God speaks clearly that whoever believes in God, His Messengers, His Angels, and the Day of Judgment, and offers the devotional duties, he would be a sound Muslim and so the hadiths of the Messenger speak. Thus, it would not be logical, nor would it be in ac-

cordance with Islam to say that no one would be deserving the admission into Paradise except a Muslim who believes that the Prophet did not choose Ali as his successor.

It would not be in accordance with Islam to say that whoever does not follow one of the four Sunnite Schools would not be from the people of Paradise, even if he (she) follows the Book of God and the teaching of the Holy Prophet.

Abu Bakr and the rest of the companions were neither Hanafi nor Maliki, nor Shafi-i, or Hunbuli.

God is too great to fail in His promise and too fair to respond to the desires of the fanatics. He, the Almighty, is too just to punish His servants and deprive them from His reward because they did not believe in a doctrine He did not mention to them in His Book, nor did His Messenger speak of.

It would not be logical that the Muslims would be excused when they say that Abu Bakr was the first legitimate successor of the Messenger, though the Messenger did not say one word about appointing him; and that they (the Muslims) would not be excused when they say that Ali Ibn Abu Talib is the First legitimate Caliph, though the Prophet declared that Ali to him is like Aaron to Moses.

AGREEABLE POINTS

I have mentioned that my aim of the discussion of the succession was not to convert the Sunnites into Shi-ites or to convert the Shi-ites into Sunnites. This is what I did not expect nor did I project. My aim was to clear certain points which I think can be a ground for a mutual understanding among the Muslims. The fruit of such understanding would hopefully be the elimination of mutual suspicions among them, and replacing it with a genuine brotherhood and trust. Thus, the Muslims will be able to agree that all believers in Islam deserve the reward of God if they offer their devotional duties after they have

believed in God, His Messenger, His Book, His Angels, and the Resurrection regardless of their views concerning the caliphate.

It seems to me that the discussion of the caliphate which was presented has cleared many points which can be a ground for a mutual Islamic understanding. Of these points are the following:

A. The theory which says that Ali was the choice of the Holy Prophet for the leadership of the nation is not an innovation in religion; nor is it a deviation from the Faith; nor is it a claim that has no support of evidence. It is, rather, a genuine Islamic theory that represents the middle and straight Islamic road. It is consonant with the nature of the Islamic teachings. Appointing a successor was not an innovation in Islam. Abu Bakr appointed Omar, for the interest of Islam and the Muslims, and Abu Bakr was not more concerned with the future of Islam and the nation than the Holy Prophet.

The Muslim scholars do not argue about the authenticity of the hadith of Ghadeer Khum and other authentic hadiths, from which the Shi-ites understand positively that the Holy Prophet had chosen Ali to succeed him. The Sunnites take a negative attitude towards its indication of Ali's successorship. They have the right to take such a negative attitude, but they have no right to criticize the Shi-ites for having a positive attitude concerning this indication.

Neither the positive nor the negative attitude towards the indication of these hadiths impair the faith of either party or makes it deviate from the right road.

THE SHI-ITE COMPANIONS OF THE PROPHET

B. Being a Shi-ite (follower) of Ali and the rest of the members of the House of the Prophet is not something that took place only after the death of the Holy Prophet. It is not a new opinion in Islam, adopted by some people

who did not accompany the Prophet and did not hear from him. Nay, it is a principle that was adopted by outstanding companions of the Holy Prophet whom the Prophet himself commended and testified for their truth and their being on the right road.

This group of outstanding companions included the following companions: Abu Tharr Al-Ghafari, about whom the Holy Messenger said, "Neither the Heaven shaded nor the earth carried a truer person than Abu Tharr. Certainly he does walk on earth with the immaterialism of Jesus, Son of Mary."⁸

Ammar Ibn Yasir, who along with his parents were told by the Messenger: "Family of Yasir, be patient, for your destination is Paradise." And the Holy Prophet said to him: "Ammar, be cheerful, the aggressor party shall kill you."⁹

Al-Miqdad Ibn Al-Aswad, who is one of the four men whom the Prophet was commanded to love. "God commanded me," he said, "to love four, and informed me that He loves them." People asked him: Messenger of God, who are they? He said: Ali is from them (repeating that three times). And Abu Tharr and Selman and Al-Miqdad."¹⁰

Selman Al-Farisi was one of the men about whom the Messenger said: "Paradise longs for three men: Ali, Ammar, and Selman."¹¹

And Ibn Abbas about whom the Messenger said: "God, I ask Thee to teach him the interpretation and make him knowledgeable in religion and make him from the People of belief."¹²

All these and many others from the companions were followers of Ali, even during the days of the first Three

8. Al-Termathi, his authentic *Sunan*, part 5, p. 334.

9. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 383.

10. Ibn Majah, his authentic *Sunan*, part 1, p. 53, hadith no. 149.

11. Al-Termathi, in his authentic *Sunan*, part 5, p. 332, hadith no. 3884.

12. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 536.

Caliphs. They used to believe that succession is an exclusive right of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet. Had they had supporters, they would have fought to bring Ali to power. When the Third Caliph was brought to power, Ammar and Al-Miqdad called upon the Imam Ali to fight. But the Imam refused to do that.¹³

I do not believe that there are, among the present Shi-ites, people who could be more Shi-ites than Abu Tharr who reported that the Messenger of God said: "Whoever obeys me obeys God, and whoever disobeys me disobeys God. And whoever obeys Ali obeys me, and whoever disobeys Ali disobeys me."¹⁴ He reported also that the Messenger said to Ali: "Ali, whoever parts with me parts with God, and whoever parts with you parts with me."¹⁵

And Abu Tharr is the one who said while he was holding the door of the Kaaba: "Whoever knows me, I am the one whom he knows, and whoever does not know me, I am Abu Tharr. I heard the Prophet saying: "The position of the members of my House among you is the position of Noah's ark among his people. Whoever embarked on it was saved and whoever did not embark on it was drowned."¹⁶

LEGITIMACY AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF ELECTIVE CALIPHATE

C. Had the Messenger not chosen a successor to lead the nation after him, or had he appointed a successor without making the appointment clear to the companions, they could have elected a caliph. The Muslims have the right to authorize whomever they choose to administer their affairs. The election would be a contract between the

13. The author, *The Brother of the Prophet*, vol. 1, chapter 20, pp. 244-245.

14. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 131.

15. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, part 3, p. 144.

16. Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, p. 3, p. 151.

electors and the elected. Such a contract is to be fulfilled and respected as long as the elected caliph fulfills the condition upon which the election was based. If the election is made on the basis of adherence to the Book of God and the instructions of the Holy Prophet, the electors have to obey the caliph as long as he follows the Book and the instructions of the Prophet.

In spite of the legitimacy of such an elective succession, such a succession has two negative aspects:

1. No Muslim would be sinning if he refuses to elect such a caliph, even if the overwhelming majority elects him. A minority can refuse to elect him and to disagree with the majority and to believe that he is not qualified for leadership. His leadership is not by a revelation from God, nor by a directive from the Prophet. Since God and His Messenger did not command the Muslims to elect him, a negative attitude towards his election by a person or a minority would not be a violation of a commandment of God or the instructions of the Holy Prophet.

However, it would be the duty of the minority, or the individual who refuses to elect such a caliph to refrain from hindering the administration of the government which is headed by the caliph. In addition to this, it would be the duty of the minority or the individual who does not elect him to obey him if his obedience is an obedience to God. For the Almighty says: "O you who believe, obey God and obey the Messenger and Olil-Amr (men of command) from among you." This would be the rule if the word "Olil-Amr" meant what includes the rulers whom the Holy Prophet did not appoint.

Since the minority has the right not to elect the one who was elected by the majority, the elected has no right to force an opposing minority to change its attitude. And if he does, he would be unjust and an usurper of the right of political freedom.

It is well known in historical events that the two highly considered companions, Saad Ibn Abu Waqass and Abdullah Ibn Omar, refused to elect the Imam Ali and he did not force them to do that. These companions did not see a

sin in their refusal to elect him, though each one of them was well aware of the qualifications of the Imam and his outstanding record in Islam.

The Imam himself refused to elect Abu Bakr and continued his refusal for six months. Had the wars of Faith-deserters not started during the time of the First Caliph, the Imam would have continued his negative attitude, and he did not see any sin in taking such an attitude.

This is what the free nations in this century follow. When a president of a nation is elected by a majority and his rival is elected by a minority, the majority does not try to force the minority to change its negative attitude into a positive one. The minority continues its opposition without trying to obstruct the administration of the winner.

If a contemporary of the First Caliph had the right to refuse to elect him, the following generations would have the right to believe or to disbelieve in his qualifications and the soundness of his succession. Thus, the mutual incrimination of the Muslims for their negative or positive attitude towards particular caliphs who died centuries ago, would not be of religion. It would be, rather, an addition to the religion and has no justification.

2. An elected caliph with a limited knowledge would not be more than a righteous "mujtahid" (scholar that has the right to form an independent opinion about some unclear details in the Islamic rules). It would be permissible for a person who is not a scholar to follow a scholar other than the caliph. The opinion of the caliph would not be an Islamic Law because he is not immune from error. Election by the majority does not change his personality. He would not become immune from error if he were not so before his election: nor would it make him extremely knowledgeable if his knowledge were limited.

A caliph that was appointed by the Prophet would not have these two negative aspects. The nation has to accept his leadership and no one would be permitted to oppose him or to refrain from his election because refusal to elect him would be a violation of the command of the

Messenger. His religious directives, commands and prohibitions would be Islamic Laws, because he is the Prophet's representative and his holiness emanates from the holiness of the Prophet. His selection of him indicates that he views him to be the most knowledgeable among the Muslims in the Book of God and the instructions of the Messenger.

THE HOUSE OF THE PROPHET IS TO BE FOLLOWED

D. The Hadith of "Al-Thaqalain" (The Two Valuables) clearly informs us that the Messenger commanded the Muslims to follow the instructions of the members of his House in the Islamic Law. This is because the Prophet declared that the Qur'an and the members of his House will never part with each other until the Day of Judgment.

Muslims may, for political reasons, argue about the indication of the hadith concerning the succession of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet to the Prophet. But the hadith clearly informs us of the Prophet's endorsement of their teaching.

It is needless to emphasize the authenticity of the Hadith "Al-Thaqalain" which was reported by about twenty companions. The refusal of Muslim scholars to follow the reported teaching of the House of the Prophet is indefensible and an obvious disagreement with the Prophet. It is less defensible to make the adherence to the teaching of the four Imams mandatory to the Muslims, yet the Prophet never recommended any of them.

The least of what these scholars should have done is to put the teachings of the House of the Holy Prophet on an equal level with that of the four Imams.

As a matter of fact, the followers of the Four "Mathabs" (Schools) took towards the instructions of the House of the Holy Prophet the attitude of suspicion and denial without knowing those instructions. They thought

that those instructions do not deserve their concern or respect. As the followers of the Four Schools took such an attitude, they disagreed with their own Imams and were more kingly than the king. Abu Haneefah was a student of the Imam Jafaar Al-Sadiq,¹⁷ and he used to believe that he was the most knowledgeable among the people of his time.

Al-Mansoor (the second Abbaside caliph) ordered Abu Haneefah to prepare for the Imam Al-Sadiq a large number of difficult questions. Abu Haneefah asked the Imam in the presence of Al-Mansoor forty questions and the Imam Al-Sadiq answered each of those questions. In addition to this, he informed Abu Haneefah about the views of the Iraqi scholars and the views of the Hijazi scholars concerning each one of those questions. Abu Haneefah commented, thereafter, saying: "Certainly, the most knowledgeable among people is the most knowledgeable of their various opinions."¹⁸

Abu Haneefah spoke of the Imam Al-Sadiq's magnanimity, saying: "I came to Al-Mansoor while Jaafar Ibn Mohammad was sitting at his right. When I looked at Jaafar Ibn Mohammad, I felt that his magnanimity commanded more respect than the power of Al-Mansoor."¹⁹ Yet, Al-Mansoor was the ruler of the whole Muslim World and Jaafar was a private citizen and powerless.

Imam Malik also was from the students of Imam Jaafar and benefited from his knowledge.²⁰ It is reported that Malik said: "I used to go to Jaafar Ibn Mohammad, and he was often smiling but when the Holy Prophet was mentioned, the seriousness and marks of respect appeared on his face. Whenever I visited him, I found him in one of three situations: Either praying, or fasting, or reading the Holy Qur'an. Whenever he spoke about the Messenger of God, he did that while he was on ablution and he always

17. Abu Zuhrah, *Al-Imam Al-Sadiq*, p. 25.

18. Abu Zuhrah, *Al-Imam Al-Sadiq*, p. 27.

19. Abu Zuhrah, *Al-Imam Al-Sadiq*, p. 27.

20. Abu Zuhrah, *Al-Imam Al-Sadiq*, p. 66.

spoke the right words. He was from God-fearing people who are not materialistic but true worshippers . . .”²¹

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hunbul reported Hadith “Al- Tha-qalain” through many channels: He recorded in his *Musnad* through two channels to Zeid Ibn Thabit that the Messenger said: “I am leaving in you two caliphs: The Book of God, a rope extended between heaven and earth, and the members of my House. And they will never part with each other until they join me at the Basin (on the Day of Judgment).”²²

He recorded that Abu Sa-eed Al-Khidri reported that the Messenger said: “I am about to be summoned (by God to depart from this world), and I shall respond. I am leaving in you the Two Valuables: The Book of God, and the members of my House. The Book of God is a rope extended between heaven and earth, and the members of my House. The Almighty informed me that they shall never part with each other until they join me at the Basin. Beware how you shall treat them after me.”²³ This hadith was also reported by Imam Ahmad through his channel to Zeid Ibn Arqam.

Sheikh Mohammad Abu Zuhrah, a contemporary distinguished Islamic scholar, said: “The Muslims never agreed, in spite of their affiliations with various schools, as they agreed on the virtuousness of the Imam Al-Sadiq and his knowledge. His contemporary of the Sunnite Imams received from his knowledge and used it. Malik was one of his students and so were those who were from Malik’s ranks such as Sufyan Ibn Oyainah, Safyan Al-Thouri, and many others. Abu Haneefah also was one of his students though he and Al-Sadiq were almost from one age, and Abu Haneefah considered him the most knowledgeable among people.”²⁴

Imam Al-Shafi-i was an outstanding Shi-ite of the

21. Abu Zuhrah, *Al-Imam Al-Sadiq*, pp. 76-77.

22. Imam Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*, part 5, p. 181.

23. Imam Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*, part 3, p. 17.

24. Abu Zuhrah, *Al-Imam Al-Sadiq*, p. 66.

members of the House of the Holy Prophet. And this was recorded by reliable scholars. Ibn Hajar in his book *Al-Sawa-iq Al-Muhriquah* said that Al-Shafi-i in one of his poems said: "Members of the House of the Messenger of God, your love is an imperative duty that was revealed in the Holy Qur'an. It is a sufficient distinction for you that whoever does not pray on you has no prayer."²⁵

The four Imams were scholars and "mujtahids" (scholars who are qualified to form independent opinions in the Islamic rules which is not clear enough to be a place of agreement among Muslim scholars). The rules which are completely clear in the faith of Islam do not have room for "ijtihad" or opinion. It would not be said that the (opinion) of Abu Haneefah or any other one of the Four Imams is that the five daily prayers are devotional duties or that the morning prayer is composed of two Rakaas.

These matters have no place for opinions because they are self-evident in Islam.

Due to the absence of specific instructions in the Qur'an or the "Sunnah" of the Prophet in some details of the Islamic rules or because the instructions are unclear or because there are conflicting hadiths, some of the rules are usually unknown to the Muslim scholars.

The four Imams formed their various opinions in matters such as whether a praying person should put one hand over the other while standing or should he free both hands. Should or should not a praying person start any Qur'anic chapter he (she) reads, by reading: "Bismillahi-RRahmani-RRaheem (In the name of The Almighty, The Beneficent, The Merciful). Should a Muslim wash or wipe his feet while making his ablution for prayer? Again, would or would not ablution be spoiled by merely touching a woman? In such matters, most of the "mujtahids" formed their opinions but without reaching the degree of certainty. Because most of the opinions of the

25. Al-Fakhr Al-Razi, in his *Commentary on the Holy Qur'an*, chapter 42, verse 43.

“mujtahids” are not certain, they were called “math-dhabs.” Since most of the verdicts in this area are uncertain and their sources are not clear, the Imams differed with each other about the rules. The opinions of these Imams conflicted with each other. Therefore, we know that some of them did not agree with the Holy Prophet because his teachings do not contradict each other. It would not be logical that the Holy Prophet says, for example, that touching a woman’s hand spoils and does not spoil ablution.

If we take one of the two opinions by itself, it may be in agreement with the instructions of the Holy Prophet, but we cannot be sure of that, because we do not know with certainty what the Holy Prophet said concerning the law in question.

That is the situation with the opinion of the mujtahid. The teachings of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet do not disagree with each other because they do not try to form opinions about the Islamic Rules. They knew the rules with certainty. What one of them, such as the Imam Jaafar Al-Sadiq, said is what all the Imams from the House of the Holy Prophet said. What they said is what the Messenger of God said. Whatever they said concerning the Shari-a is a report which came to each one of them, through a channel composed of these Holy Imams starting with the Imam Ali, and what Imam Ali reported is what the Holy Prophet said.

It is reported that Al-Imam Al-Sadiq said: “My statement is the statement of my father. The statement of my father is the statement of my grandfather. The statement of my grandfather is the statement of Al-Hussein. The statement of Al-Hussein is the statement of Al-Hassan. The statement of Al-Hassan is the statement of Ameer Al-Mumineen, Ali. The statement of Ameer Al-Mumineen is the statement of the Messenger of God, and the statement of the Messenger of God is a Revelation of God.”²⁶

Athafer Al-Seirafi reported that he was with Al-

26. Abu Zuhrah, *Al-Imam Al-Sadiq*, p. 425.

Hakam Ibn Oyainah at the house of the Imam Mohammad Al-Baquir (the father of Jaafar Al-Sadiq). Oyainah asked Al-Baquir about some Islamic rules. Abu Jaafar told his son to bring the book of Ali. He brought a huge book and Al-Baquir opened it and looked at it until he found the subject in question. Abu Jaafar said: This is the writing of Ali and the dictation of the Messenger of God. Then he looked at Al-Hakam and said: "Abu Mohammad, go, you and Selemah and Al-Miqdad wherever you want, right or left. By God, you will not find more reliable knowledge at any place than that of a people Gabriel used to come to."²⁷

These two reports and others like them which came through the followers of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet agree with Hadith "Al-Thaqalain," the recorders of which from the Sunnites reported through their channels which included about twenty companions. This hadith testifies, as we mentioned before, that the instructions of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet always agree with what God and His Messenger said. The Almighty God, according to the hadith, informed the Messenger that the Book of God and the members of the House of the Holy Prophet will never part with each other (until the Day of Judgment). The Prophet, therefore, declared in the hadith itself that adherence to the Book of God and the members of the House of the Holy Prophet represented a security for the Muslims against straying.

Therefore, their instructions are the instructions of the Prophet himself. Their statements in religion are not opinions based upon conjectures like the opinions of the righteous four Imams. They are, rather, reports of the Prophet's own statements and these reports are of the highest degree of authenticity, because they never parted with the Holy Qur'an.

I do not mean that the scholars from the Shi-ites and their hadith-recorders knew with certainty all of what the

27. Abu Zuhrah, *Imam Al-Sadiq*, p. 425.

members of the House of the Holy Prophet stated of instructions. Nay, the Shi-ite scholars and reporters do not know with certainty all instructions of these Imams. Those instructions came to the reporters and scholars through hadiths which were reported by one or a few reporters. Therefore, they did not become certain. Some of the hadiths which reported the instructions of these Imams were contradicting each other or their indications were not clear.

This should not harm. What was reported of these Imams is like what was reported of the statement of the Messenger himself. Most of the hadiths which reported the instructions of the Holy Prophet were not "Mutawatir" (reported independently by numerous reporters which makes it certain). And some of it does not have a clear indication. Yet, in spite of all that, we cannot put the hadiths of the Holy Prophet on the same level with the opinions of "mujtahids." This is because when a hadith of the Prophet is mutawatir or near to it, it produces certainty concerning the Divine law. *On the other hand, if the verdict of a mujtahid were reported with certainty, we would not be certain that the verdict agrees with the Divine law.* This is because the mujtahid who issued the verdict was not recommended by the Prophet as a man who does not part with the Holy Qur'an.

It saddens us and we consider it less than fair that the Sunnite Schools refuse to put instructions of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet, at least, on equal level with the verdicts of the four Imams, in spite of what the Messenger of God said about his House while he did not say anything about the four Imams.

UNJUSTIFIABLE BIAS

Some of the Sunnite scholars justify their negative attitude towards the instructions of the House of the Prophet by saying that they do not follow these instructions because they do not have confidence in the reporters who conveyed these instructions. This means that they do not

have confidence in the Shi-ite hadith-recorders. Yet, the logical way through which we can know the verdicts of an Imam is to take it from his followers rather than from his opponents. Would it be fair on the part of the Shi-ites if they want to know the verdicts of Abu Hanfah to say: We do not accept these verdicts, because they were reported by his followers and we do not have confidence in them?

When did God and His Messenger say that the reporters and the recorders of the hadith have to be Sunnites rather than Shi-ites? The Almighty prohibited us from following the report of transgressors when He said: "O you who believe (In Islam), if a transgressor brought to you information, try to verify it lest you damage a community in ignorance; then you will regret what you have done."²⁸ Being a follower of the House of the Prophet and adherent to their instructions is not a transgression, nor being a non-Shi-ite is a righteousness.

To love the members of the House of the Holy Prophet and to follow their instructions is actually a confirmation of righteousness and a major good deed. The Almighty has mentioned in His Book that He will double such a good deed. He commanded His Prophet to inform the Muslims that their reward to him on the delivery of the Message is their loyalty to the members of his House and so the Almighty said to him: "Say: I ask you no reward for it (delivery of message) but to be loyal to my kindred. And whoever does a good deed, We shall increase his goodness. Certainly God is Wealthy and Thankful."²⁹

We have already mentioned that a good number of the outstanding companions of the Holy Prophet were followers of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet. The Messenger himself asked his Lord to love whoever loves Ali and be hostile to whoever is hostile to him.³⁰

It is the duty of the Muslim scholars to wage a campaign of correction to remove from the minds of the

28. The Holy Qur'an, chapter 49, verse 23.

29. The Holy Qur'an, chapter 42, verse 23.

30. The author, *this book*, part 2, chapter 38.

Muslims what has been left in it of prejudice inherited from the Omayyads who used to punish the Muslims for their loyalty to Ali.

The duty of all Muslim scholars is to inform the masses of the Muslims about the following simple fact: The four Schools of thought which are followed by the Sunnite Muslims are not the only means of knowing the Islamic Law. *They ought to inform them of the simple truth that the Holy Prophet did not command the Muslims to follow these four schools; that these schools were born more than one hundred years after the Prophet's death; and that the religion of Islam was completed before the death of the Holy Prophet. How could the adherence to these four Schools be a requirement for Islam or Iman while Islam was completed long before their birth?*

The four Imams were scholars, mujtahids, and qualified to issue verdicts. How can we justify the belief that these four Imams were the only mujtahids or the only qualified to give verdicts? *How can we believe that the Muslim women from all generations will never be able to give birth to men equal to the four Imams?*

We believe that the Messenger of God was the Final of the Prophets only because God informed us in His great Book that Mohammad is the *Final* of the Prophets. *How can we say that Imam Ahmad Ibn Hunbul (the last of the four Imams) is the Final of the mujtahids, and that no qualified person for issuing verdicts will ever come after him? Did the Almighty or His Messenger inform us of this?*

What is available and what will be available to the Muslim scholars who came after these four Imams from the books of hadith and its authentic sources were not available to the four Imams. To substantiate this, it would be sufficient to remember that the first of the Sahihs which are accepted by the Sunnite Muslims is "Sahih Al-Bukhari." This Sahih was not available to a man like Abu Haneefah, because he was born in the year eighty-two after the Hijrah, and Al-Bukhari was born one hundred and ninety years after the Hijrah. Of course, he did not

write his book when he was born. The logical opinion is to say that the door of "ijtihad" remained open after the four Imams rather than to say that that door has been closed forever without any rational justification.

Granted that the door of "ijtihad" had been closed for all generations after the four Imams. *How can we close that door in the face of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet while the Imam Jaafar Al-Sadiq was the teacher of the first two of the four Imams; Malik and Abu Haneefah?*³¹

I know it is not easy to change an opinion that has been established in the minds of the Muslims for several centuries, but it would not be impossible if a good number of good scholars would wage a corrective and educational campaign throughout the Muslim World. The scholars can use the mass media which was not available in any previous century.

MY HUMBLE EFFORT

In 1959, I attempted to begin a campaign in this direction. I visited Egypt and met the late President Jamal Abdul-Nasser. I discussed with him and with the late Sheikh Al-Azhar Sheikh Mahmoud Shaltut (on the first day of July) separately the matter of reconciliation between the Sunnite and the Shi-ite Schools. I spoke to each of the two leaders about the necessity of solving this problem and about the way through which it can be solved.

I said to each of them that this is a problem started during the Omayyad era and continued through the Abbaside era and the Turkish period. We still suffer a great deal with this problem, which continues to separate the Muslims and spread suspicions among them and make them reciprocate false accusations.

I said to both leaders that the Shi-ite Imami Jaafaris (the followers of the Imam Jaafar Al-Sadiq) are not seeking a privilege or superiority. They want the Muslim

31. Abu Zuhrah, *Al-Imam Al-Sadiq*, p. 25.

World to know that the teachings of the Imam Jaafar Al-Sadiq and the rest of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet are not less valuable and sound than the teachings of the four Imams. The teachings which the Shi-ite Imami Jaafari follow deserve and command the respect of all Muslims. Those who follow these teachings are sound Muslims and true believers like the followers of the four schools. I said that a declaration by the Sheikh Al-Azhar in this direction will be a sound step in the way of the Islamic unity.

Sheikh Al-Azhar asked me: "Would it not be sufficient for solving this problem to teach the Jaafari Math-hab (school of thought) at Al-Azhar?" I replied in the negative, and mentioned to him two reasons:

1. Teaching of the Jaafari Math-hab does not indicate that Al-Azhar and its Sheikh believe in the soundness of such a Math-hab. Al-Azhar can decide to teach the Marxist theory. This would not indicate that you believe in the soundness of that theory.

2. Teaching of the Jaafari math-hab at Al-Azhar may make a few hundred students of Al-Azhar aware of this Math-hab. This is not our aim. Our aim is to inform the millions of Muslims of the soundness of the teachings of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet Mo-hammad. This would not be accomplished except by issuing a verdict of equality between the Jaafari Math-hab and the four Math-habs. Such a declaration should be published and announced through all Islamic media. This may inform the millions of Muslims at once about this truth which was ignored for hundreds of years.

The grand Sheikh responded to this suggestion immediately. On the following day his son-in-law and secretary Mr. Ahmad Nassar visited me and brought the good tidings: The Grand Sheikh had responded to my invitation and issued a verdict about the subject. I went with him to the Grand Sheikh, thanking him for his historical achievement. The Sheikh read to me the text of the verdict before publishing it.

On the seventh of July, 1959, the Middle East radio

station and the Egyptian and the Lebanese press published the text of the verdict of the Grand Sheikh.

Sheikh Al-Azhar issued his verdict in a form of an answer to a question that was directed to him as follows:

“Some people view that in order to have religiously sound devotions and transactions, it would be imperative to follow one of the four known Islamic schools: Hanafi, Shafi-i, Hunbali, and Maliki. This excludes the two Shi-ite schools: Imami (Jaafari) and Zeidi. Sheikh Shaltut in answering this question stated the following:

“It is permissible to a non-“mujtahid” (the one who is not qualified to give his own opinion) to follow the opinion of “Olama” (Muslim scholars), whose knowledge and piety are believed, provided such an opinion reaches its followers in a correct and nearly certain way, directly or indirectly.

“We should not be concerned with a view expressed in some books which claims that the four schools are the only ones to follow, and that it is not permissible for a person to move from one school to another.

“The word Shi-a (Shi-ite) by which the followers of Ali (the son of Abu Talib) are known, is derived from the word “mushaya-ah” which means to follow. . . . There are groups related to Ali, and they are the well-guided ones. Of these good Shi-a is the group which is known by the name of Jaafari or Imami Ithna-Ashari. This well known school follows principles that are taken from the Book of God and the teachings of His Messenger which reached them through their Imams in both fundamental belief and Islamic Law.

“The difference between the Jaafari and Sunni Schools is not greater than the difference among the Sunni Schools themselves. They (the Jaafaris) believe in the fundamental principles of Islam as they are stated in the Glorious Qur’an and the teaching of the Prophet. They also believe in all the rules whose inclusion in the religion of Islam is self-evident and whose recognition is required for being a Muslim and the denial of which excludes the person from Islam. The Math-hab of these Jaafari Shi-

ites in the Islamic laws is completely recorded and well known. It has its own books, conveyers (who reported the statements of the Prophet and the Imams) and the supporting evidence of what they convey. The authors of these books and those from whom these authors had received the (hadiths) are well known, and their scholarly and jurisprudential ranks are respected among the Muslim scholars.

“From this explanation, it becomes evident that:

1. Islam does not command any of its followers to follow a particular Islamic School. On the contrary, it establishes for every Muslim the right to follow, at the beginning, any one of the correctly conveyed Math-habs, whose verdicts are recorded in their respective books. It is permissible also to any one that follows one of these schools to change to another one—any other school—and he is not sinning by doing that.

“2. The Jaafari school which is known as “The math-hab of the Ithna-Ashari,” Imami Shi-i is a sound school. It is permissible to worship God according to its teaching, like the rest of the Sunni schools.

“3. The Muslims ought to know this and get rid of their undue bigotry for particular schools. The religion of God and His law do not follow, nor are they bound to, a particular school. All the founders of these schools are mujtahid (qualified to give verdict), reward-deserving from God, and acceptable to Him. It is permissible to the non-mujtahid to follow them and to accord with their teaching, whether in devotion or transactions.”

This recognition should have taken place during the second century after the Hijrah when the four Islamic Schools were in the stage of formation. The School of the Imam Jaafar is the School of the House of the Prophet Mohammad who was declared by the Prophet to be inseparable from the Qu’ran, and that the adherence to the Qur’anic teaching and their teaching represents security against straying. This is the School of the Imam Ali who

was declared by the Prophet to be the gate of the city of knowledge.

The fact is that the Omayyads and the Abbasides policies viewed that recognizing the School of the House of the Prophet is dangerous to them.

However, the Declaration of Sheikh Al-Azhar is a positive step and in the right direction. It is true that it came very late but it is an indication that some of the contemporary Islamic scholars have a new and sound way of thinking. Should this step be followed by other positive steps, the Muslim World may regain its brotherhood and unity.

Glossary

A

Aal, or Ahl Beit Mohammad: Members of the house of the Prophet Mohammad

Al-Abbas: one of the uncles of the Prophet Mohammad

Abbyssinia: Ethiopia, an African country

Abdul Muttalib: the grandfather of the Prophet

Abdul-Rahman Ibn Ouf: one of the early Qureshite companions of the Prophet Mohammad

Abdullah: a common name meaning “the servant of God,” also the name of the father of the Prophet

Abdullah Ibn Omar: a companion who was a son of Omar the second ruler after the Prophet

Abdullah Ibn Sarh: one of the hypocrites who adopted Islam out of necessity

Abu Bakr: the first elected caliph after the death of the Prophet

Abu Huraira: a companion of the Prophet and an excessive reporter

Abu Nudrah: one of the companions of the Prophet

Abu Obeidah Ibn al-Jarrah: a relatively early companion

Abu Sufyan: father of Muaweyah, adopted Islam after a long hostility toward the Prophet

Abu Talib: the outstanding uncle and protector of the Prophet. He is the father of the Iman Ali

Abu Tharr: a highly righteous and early companion of the Prophet

Al-Ahwaz: a city and a province in Iran

Al-Lat: a name of an idol

Amina: an adjective which meant safe and a name of the Prophet's mother

Ammar Ibn Yasir: one of the outstanding and early companions

Amr Ibn Al-Auss: a well-known wily Qureshite companion

Amr Ibn Wodd: a famous pagan Qureshite hero who lost his duel with the Iman Ali

Arafat: a holy place in the vicinity of Mecca

Aqeel: a brother of the Iman Ali

Ayeshah: a wife of the Prophet

Azarbaijan: a province in the north of Iran

B

Badr: the place of the first important and famous battle between the Prophet and his Qureshite pagan enemies

Al-Balqa: a province in Jordan

Banul-Mustalaq: a Hejazi Arab tribe

Bara-ah: the 9th chapter of the Holy Qur'an

Battle of Al-Harrah: between the righteous natives of Medina and the army of the wicked Yazeed Ibn Muaweyah

Bukhari: a hadith recorder lived during the third century after the Hijrah

C

Caliph: a person that assumes the Islamic leadership and is a direct or indirect successor of the Prophet

Caliphate: an Islamic leadership in the name of succession to the Prophet

Cave of Thour: where the Prophet hid himself from the Meccan pagans the night of the Hijrah. Abu Bakr was with him

D

Al-Daroom: a province in Palestine

Dinar: an old currency equivalent to \$20.00

Dirham: an old currency equivalent to \$2.00

Doumat Al-Jendal: an area in Hijaz

F

Fadak: a group of orchards of Palm trees in Hijaz within the area of Khaibur

Faltah: an action done hastily without deliberation

Fatima: daughter of the Prophet who survived him and was the dearest to his heart

Fihri Ibn Malik: the great-grandfather of the tribes of Mecca who were living in the area

Fulan: x man

G

Ghadeer (pond of water) Khum: a location between Mecca and Medina, at which the Prophet declared Ali's leadership

Ghatafan: an Arab tribe who were living in Hijaz at the time of the Prophet

H

Hadith: a reported statement or action or silent approval of the Prophet Mohammad

Hajar: Egyptian wife of the Prophet Abraham who was the mother of Ishmael, son of Abraham

Hajj: a pilgrim after his return from a pilgrimage to Mecca. Also a pilgrimage

Al-Hamza: one of the uncles of the Prophet Mohammad who died at the Battle of Ohad and a distinguished martyr

Harith: plower, a common name.

Hashimite: a descendant of Hashim, the grandfather of the Prophet

Al-Hassan: the first son of the Iman Ali and Fatima. He is the second Imam of the members of the House of the Prophet

Hawazin: an Arab tribe, fought the Prophet and lost to him

Hijaz: the country in which Mecca is situated. Now it is a section of Saudi Arabia

Hijrah: the departure of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina

Homs: a city in Syria

Hudeibeyah: a place near Mecca at which the Prophet made a temporary truce between him and Pagan Mec-cans

Hunain: a place at which the army of the Prophet was attacked by the tribe of Hawazin

Al-Hussein: the second son of the Imam Ali and Fatima, and the third Imam from the members of the House of the Prophet

I

Ibn: son

Ihram: to refrain from having perfume, sex, wearing sewn clothes, etc. while on a Pilgrimage to Mecca

Imam: a leader of the Muslims. The highest Imam is the one appointed by the Prophet

Imran: Imran was the father of Mary mother of Jesus

Itrah: one's closest relatives. The Prophet's contemporary itrah were Ali, Fatimah, Al-Hassan and Al-Hussein

J

Jaafar Al-Sadiq (the truthful): the sixth Imam from the members of the House of the Prophet

Jaber Ibn Abdullah: a famous companion of the Prophet. He was from the natives of Medina

Jaber Ibn Samorah: a companion of the Prophet

Al-Jarrah: the name of the father of one of the companions, also the surgeon.

Jazirah: a peninsula, a name of a province in Syria

Jihad: endeavor in the way of God

K

Kaaba: the Holy Temple which is situated in Mecca and was built by the Prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael

Kaab Ibn Ujrah: a companion of the Prophet

Kafir: unbeliever

Karbala: a famous city in Iraq. It was built after the martyrdom of Imam Hussein. Karbala is the city on the land of which the Imam Hussein was martyred

Khadeejah: the first wife of the Prophet, and is remembered as a great woman in Islamic history

Khalid Ibn Abdullah Ibn Oseid: one of the Omayyad appointed governors by the third caliph Othman

Kharijis: extremist, fanatic Muslims appeared during Imam Ali's rule as violent opponents

Kheibar: Arab Jewish community who lived at the time of the Prophet in Hijaz about eighty miles from Medina

Ibn Khumeis: a man who was an aide of an Omayyad appointed governor of Kufa

Kinana: an Arab tribe who lived in Hijaz during the time of the Prophet

Kufa: a major city in Iraq during the life of Ali

M

Maghafeer: a sticky secretion of a particular tree which had an undesirable aroma

Makhzoom: a Qureshite tribe lived in Mecca at the time of the Prophet

Malik Al-Ashtar: a Muslim hero and a staunch supporter and student of Imam Ali

Marwan: son of Al-Hakam from Omayyad. He influenced Othman the third Caliph to derail from the precept of the first two Caliphs

Musnad: a book of Hadith written by Imam Ahmad Ibn Hunbul

Mecca: the holy city which was built around the Kaaba

Medina: the city to which the Prophet migrated and made it the capital of the Islamic State

Mihras: a little collective place of water

Moat: the ditch which was dug around Medina to prevent the enemies of Islam from entering the city

Muaweya: son of Abu Sufyan who fought the Imam Ali, the brother of the Prophet

Mubahalah: a contest prayer in which two parties ask God to pursue the wrong one

Mujtahid: a Muslim scholar who can form an independent opinion in the Islamic law, based on the Qur'an and the Prophet's teaching

Mustadrak: a book authored by Al-Hakim Al-Neesaboory

Mutah: a temporary marriage

Mutawatir: a hadith reported by numerous companions

N

Naathal: name of a bearded Arab Jew who lived during the seventh century at the time of Othman the Third Caliph

Nadwa: a Qureshite club whose members were the chiefs of Mecca during the time of the Prophet

Nahjul-Balaghah: a book contains a collection of the Sermons of the Imam Ali, his messages and words

Najd: an Arab country which is now a portion of Saudi Arabia

Najran: a city in Yemen was populated by an Arab Christian community during the time of the Prophet

O

Ohod: a place near Medina at which the battle of Ohod occurred between the Prophet and the Pagans of Mecca

Om Aiman: a righteous lady commended by the Prophet

Omar: the Second Caliph

Omayad: a Qureshite clan from Mecca was strongly opposed to the Prophet and fought him, then adopted Islam after their defeat

Osamah: a companion appointed by the Prophet to lead an expedition to Palestine

Othman: the Third Caliph

Ouf: a name of the father of a companion, whose name was Abdul-Rahman

Q

Qaisites: members of Qais tribe from Iraq

Qoba: a place near Medina at which the Prophet rested before entering Medina

Quda-ah: an Arab tribe, lived in Hijaz at the time of the Prophet

Quinnisrine: a Syrian province

Quraidhah: an Arab Jewish tribe who lived near Medina during the time of the Prophet

Quraish: the clans who inhabited Mecca at the time of the Prophet

Qur'an: the Holy Book, which contains the revelations which the Prophet Mohammad received from his Lord

R

Al-Rabathah: a desert area in Najd to which the companion Abu Tharr was exiled

Rafi: a companion who served the Prophet

Rajab: the seventh month of the lunar year which begins by the month of Muharram

Ruhbah: a square in the city of Kufa during the time of the Imam Ali

S

Safa and Marwa: two sacred places near the Kaaba

Sahih: authentic

Sal'a: a place in the vicinity of Medina

Saleem: an Arab tribe lived in Hijaz at the time of the Prophet

Salim Moula Abu Hutheifa: a companion who was an ally of Abu Hutheifa, who was another companion

Salman Al-Farisi: a highly respected Iranian companion of the Prophet

Saqifat Ranu Sa-idah: a club in Medina at which the natives of Medina conferred for selecting a caliph when the Prophet died

Saraf: a place between Mecca and Medina

Al-Seerat Al-Halabeyah: Biography of the Prophet authored by Ibn Husham

Siffeen: a land in Syria at which a historical battle between the Imam Ali and Muaweyah took place

Al-Shateebah: there was during the time of the Prophet an Arab Jewish tribe called Banu Al-Shateebah

Shi-ab Abu Talib: a place in Mecca at which Abu Talib, the Prophet, and the rest of the Hashimites lived when the Meccan Pagans imposed a blockade against the Hashimite

Shi-ites: the Muslims who believe that the Prophet appointed Ali his Caliph

Sunan: plural of Sunnah. A reported statement or action or silent approval by the Prophet

Sunnites: the Muslims who believe that the Prophet did not appoint a successor and that Abu Bakr was the first caliph by election

T

Tabuk: a city in Hijaz, bordering Jordan

Ta-if: a city in Hijaz, Saudi Arabia

Talhah: an ambitious companion of the Prophet who agitated against the Third Caliph Othman and revolted against the Imam Ali

Tuhama: a province in Saudi Arabia

Al-Thaqalain: the Two Valuables, the Book of God and the Instructions of the Prophet

W

Wazeer: a minister, usually a top aide to a head of state

Y

Yazeed: a common Arabic name, also a name of the wicked ruler who was the son of Muaweyah and his appointed successor. Yazeed massacred the family of the Prophet

Al-Yamamah: a province of Saudi Arabia

Z

Zeid Ibn Arqam: a companion native of Medina

Zakat: an Islamic tax decreed in the Qur'an

Al-Zubeir: an ambitious companion that opposed Othman and revolted against the Imam Ali

Zulfiqar: a name of the sword of the Imam Ali

Bibliography

CLARIFICATION

The dates which are mentioned in this bibliography are based on the Islamic Calendar, which started by the departure of the Prophet Mohammad from Mecca to Medina. That departure is called "Hijrah" of the Prophet, which took place in the year 622 A.D.

If the reader wants to convert the dating from Islamic to the Western Calendar, he should take into account the difference of the 622 years before the Hijrah. Furthermore, the lunar year on which the Islamic Calendar is based is only 354 days. Thus, it is 11 days less than a solar year. Each one hundred solar years would be 103 lunar years. A thousand solar years is 1030 lunar years.

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